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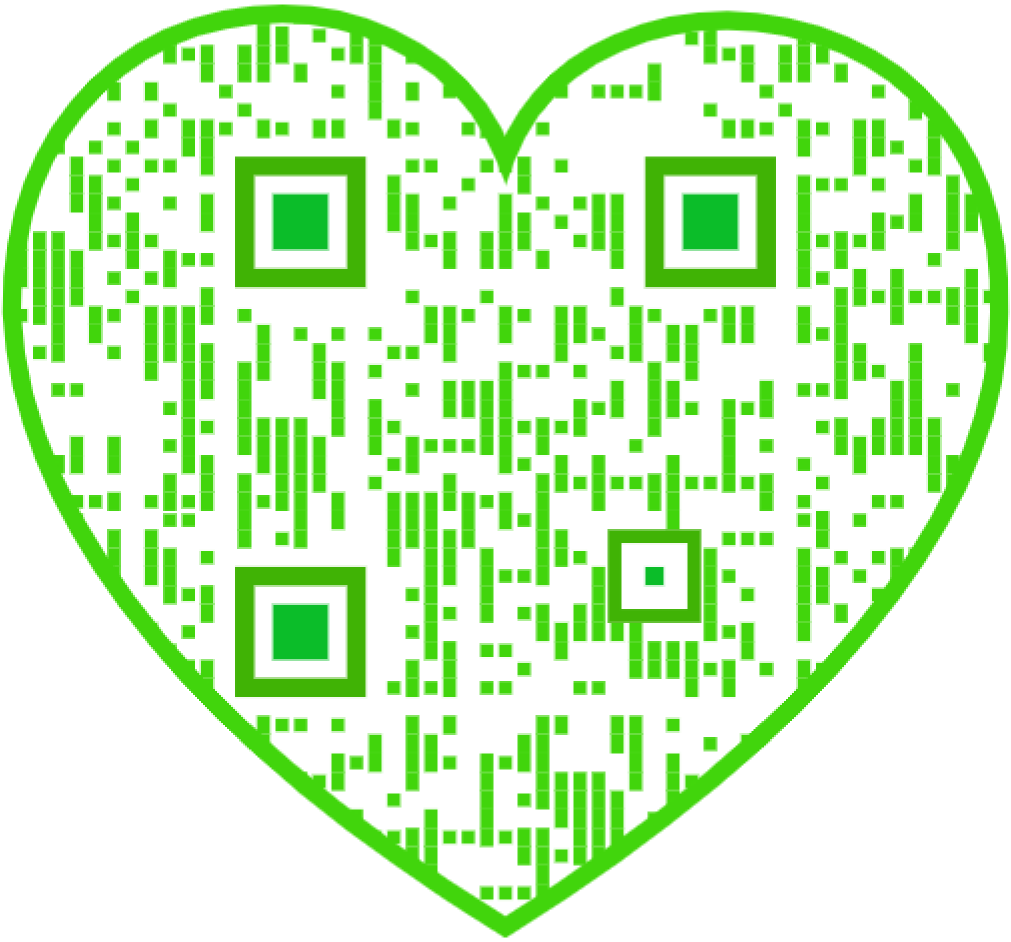

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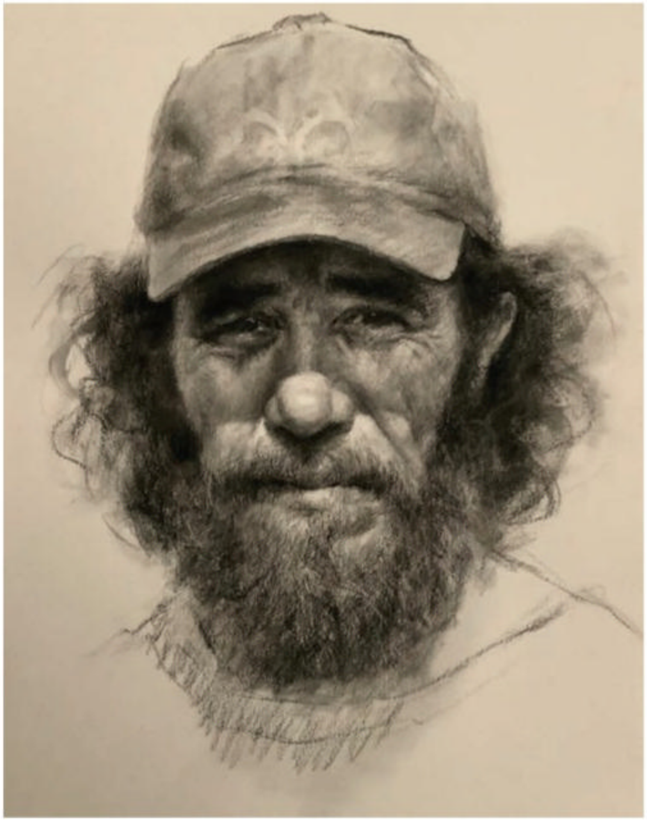

"The Faithful," 11 in. x 15 in., Nitram Charcoal and ink on toned paper

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"Born into an artistic family and surrounded by the beauty and the richness of cultural heritage, I found myself captivated by the power of visual expression. As I grew, so too did my passion for art, driving me to explore its depths and possibilities.

In many ways Nitram Charcoal resembles the medium of my artistic roots: the ink brush that I used for traditional ink wash painting and calligraphy. Both offer superb texture and surface interaction, infinite shading and tonal range, and unique qualities that suit different artistic styles and expressions. With Nitram Charcoal, my work reflects the culmination of these diverse influences—a harmonious fusion of Eastern and Western traditions, classical techniques, and contemporary vision. Each piece of work is a reflection of my personal journey, a testament to the power of art to transcend boundaries in shared emotion and understanding."

~ *Shaoli Huang*

To watch a video showing the various stages of Shaoli Huang working on a portrait with Nitram, please visit: **https://nitramcharcoal.com/Shaoli-Huang** or **scan the QR code**

Shaoli began his artistic journey at a young age and was classically trained at one of the top fine art institutions in China. In his early 20's, Shaoli immigrated to America in pursuit of better opportunity and creative freedom. Later he moved to Florence, Italy to fulfill his lifelong dream of studying western classic art in the city of the Renaissance and graduated with honors from Angel Academy of Art in Florence. By learning up close from the works of the Old Masters and connecting with his artistic roots, Shaoli seeks to bridge cultural divides, inviting viewers to journey with him across continents and through time.
Instagram: @shaoli.fineart | Website: www.shaoli.fineart.com

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www.nitramcharcoal.com

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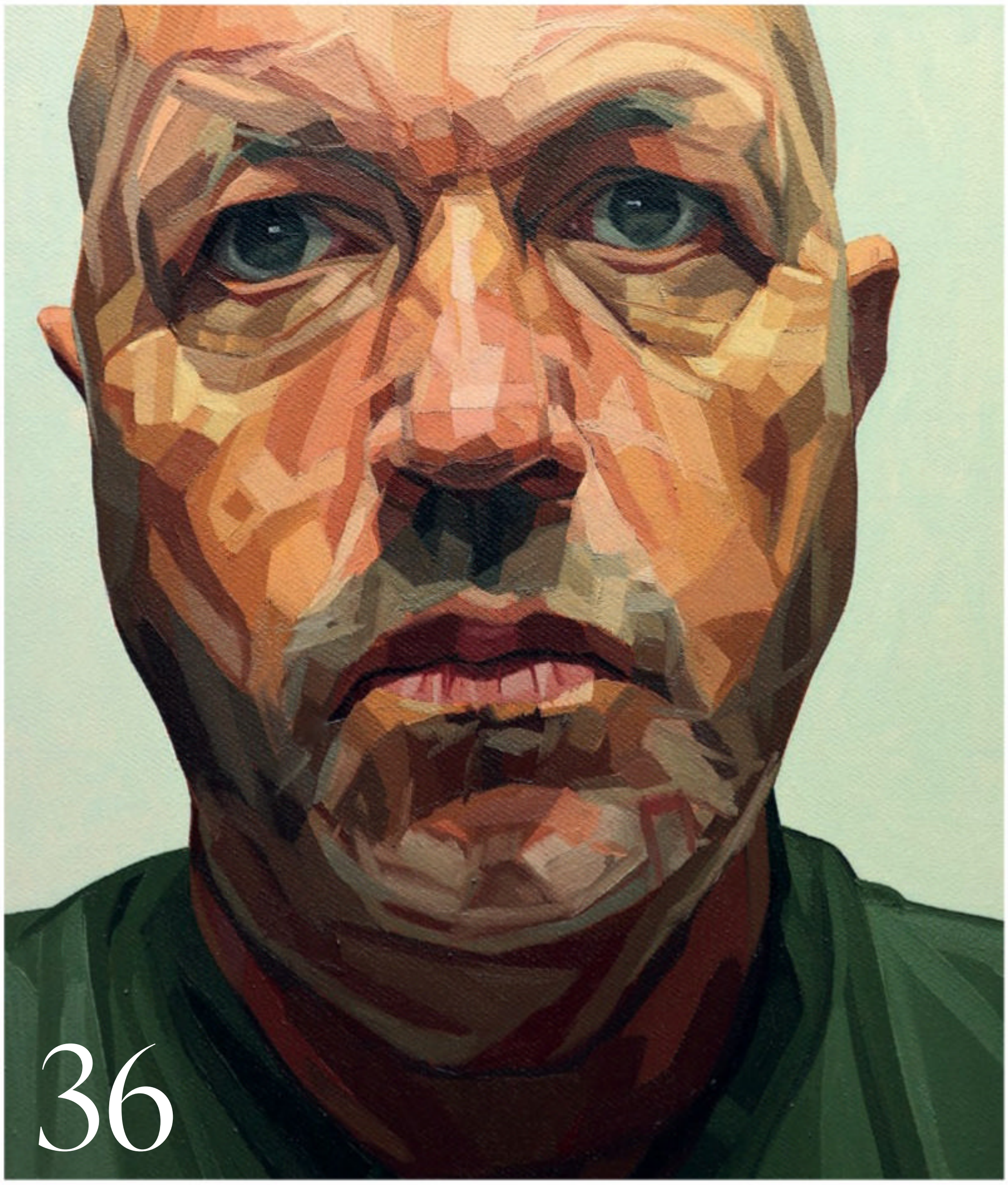
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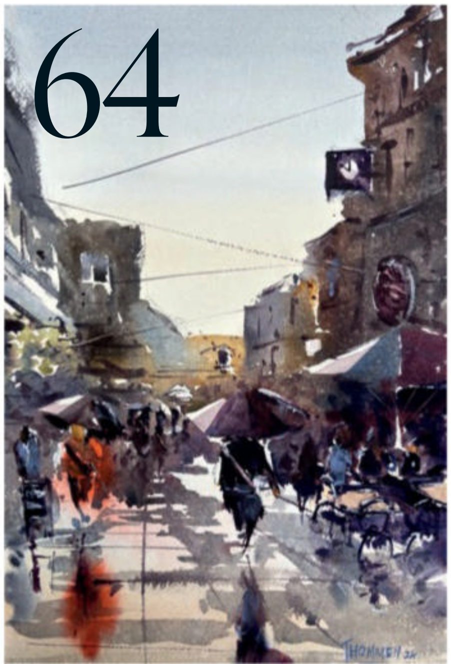
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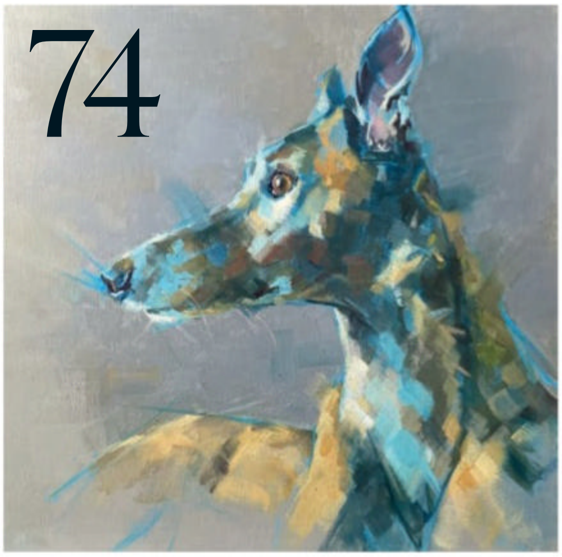
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It's always exciting...

...revealing the winners of our annual art competition, The British Art Prize. Judging this year's entries was harder than ever before, not least because the standard was way up there. Which is why the input from my fellow judges was invaluable and so it's a big thank you from me to Adebanji Alade, the Vice President of The Royal Institute of Oil Painters and Artist in Residence of The BBC's *The One Show*, Alvaro Castagnet, the world-renowned watercolour master, Dr Amy Orrock, national curator for the National Trust, lecturer at The Arts Society and art historian and Alastair Sooke, writer, broadcaster and *The Telegraph's* chief art critic. You can see the sensational results on pages 36-44.

Elsewhere in the magazine, we've got lots to entertain and enthuse. In his second to last instalment on drawing the features of the face, Jake Spicer shows you how to tackle drawing ears whilst Marilyn Allis shows you how she completed the most unique of portraits of the King in collage. If it's animal art you're into, we've got two step-by-step stories by artists who show you how they created a dog and a bird whilst still life painters at the top of their game give insight into how they transform everyday objects into the extraordinary.

Lastly, The Big Interview artist, illustrator Maja Lindberg, created our gorgeous Christmas cover image. That the season is associated with good feelings for many people means she delights in creating images relating to the period of good cheer. Why don't you follow her inspiration and have a go at getting similarly creative this Christmas?

Niki Browes Editor

INTRODUCING

MAJA LINDBERG

Our cover artist lives and works in Lomma, a seaside town in the south of Sweden, where she runs her own art company. Besides selling her prints and working on commissions, she has illustrated and co-authored several books, bringing her work to stories that captivate readers of all ages.

SAMUEL OWUSU ACHIAW

The winner of The British Art Prize is a pencil artist who specialises in hyperrealism. His background in medical anatomy drives his passion for portraiture. His artworks explore environmental themes around pollution and climate change and themes around African cultures.

ELLY HADJIPATERAS

Elly has been painting for 40 years and is self-taught. She has exhibited extensively in London including at The Royal Society of Portrait Painters, The Royal Society of British Artists and The Women in Art Fair all at the Mall Galleries and was selected twice for the Women in Art Prize.

SEBASTIAN THOMMEN

Based in Ireland, Sebastian discovered a love for watercolour in his youth, keeping it as a personal passion while pursuing acting. Recently, he embraced painting professionally, focusing on *en plein air* in his favourite medium of watercolour.

THIS MONTH'S COVER BY MAJA LINDBERG

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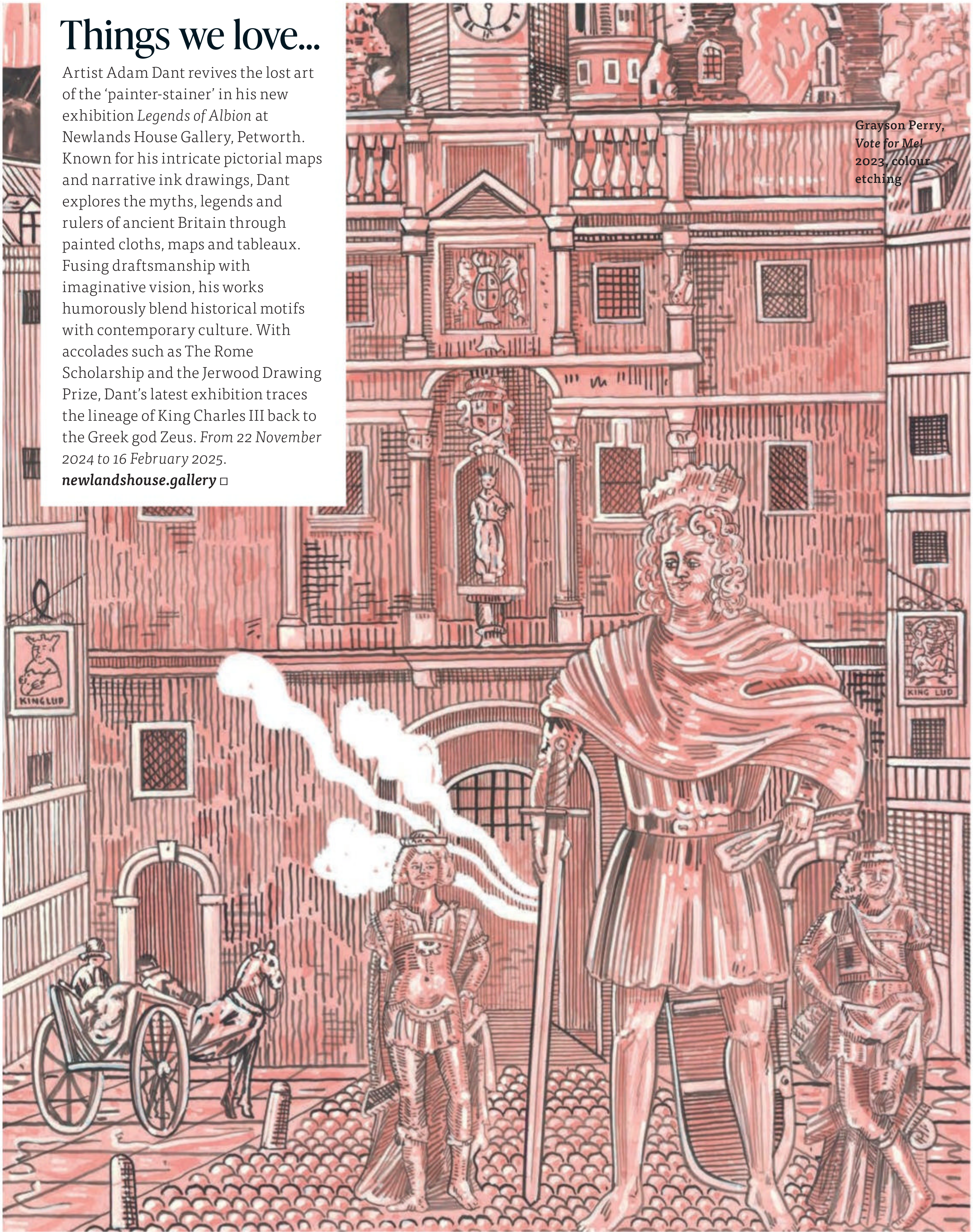
Sketchbook

TIPS • ADVICE • EXHIBITIONS • NEWS • REVIEWS

EDITED BY RAMSHA VISTRO

Things we love...

Artist Adam Dant revives the lost art of the 'painter-stainer' in his new exhibition *Legends of Albion* at Newlands House Gallery, Petworth. Known for his intricate pictorial maps and narrative ink drawings, Dant explores the myths, legends and rulers of ancient Britain through painted cloths, maps and tableaux. Fusing draftsmanship with imaginative vision, his works humorously blend historical motifs with contemporary culture. With accolades such as The Rome Scholarship and the Jerwood Drawing Prize, Dant's latest exhibition traces the lineage of King Charles III back to the Greek god Zeus. *From 22 November 2024 to 16 February 2025.*
newlandshouse.gallery □



Grayson Perry, ***Vote for Me!*** **2023, colour etching**

KING LUD AND HIS TWO SONS, ORIGINAL PAINTING, INK AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, 76X56CM

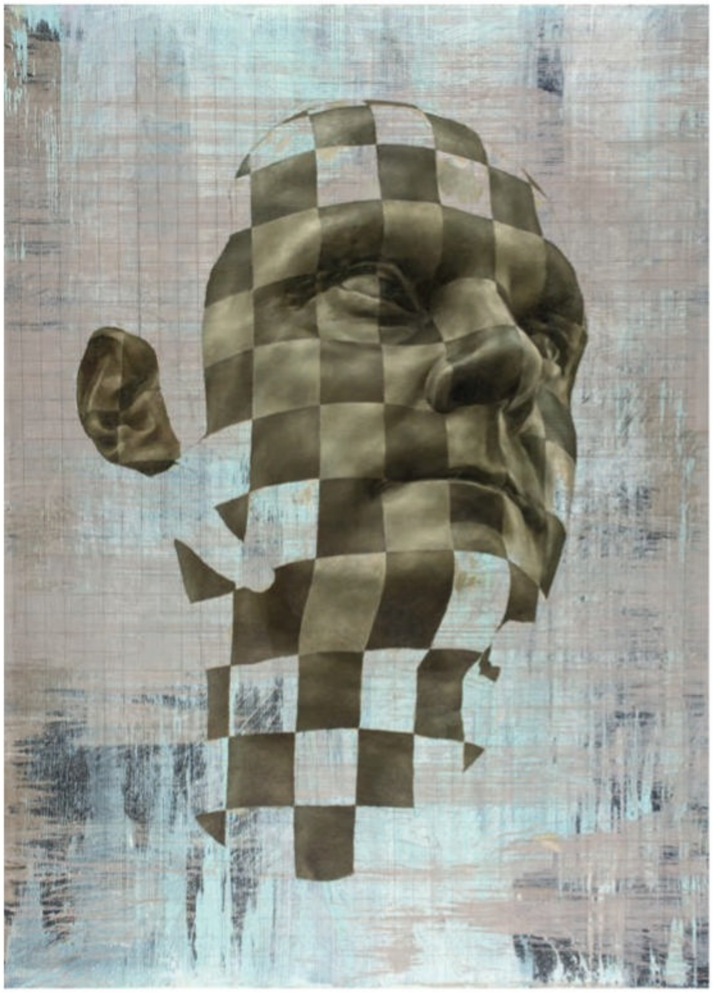
Five creative resolut

With the new year upon us, it's the perfect time to set fresh goals to enrich and enliven your artistic journey. Drawing on insights from artists at the top of their game, here are five resolutions to consider that could inspire new perspectives and techniques in your practice.

1

BUILD A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY ▶

Art is often a shared experience, and connecting with others can be invaluable. Portrait painter Simona Constantin notes, "Art thrives in connection with others." Engage with fellow artists, join workshops or connect online to gain fresh perspectives and feedback. Being part of a creative community can provide motivation, insight and inspiration to drive your work forward.

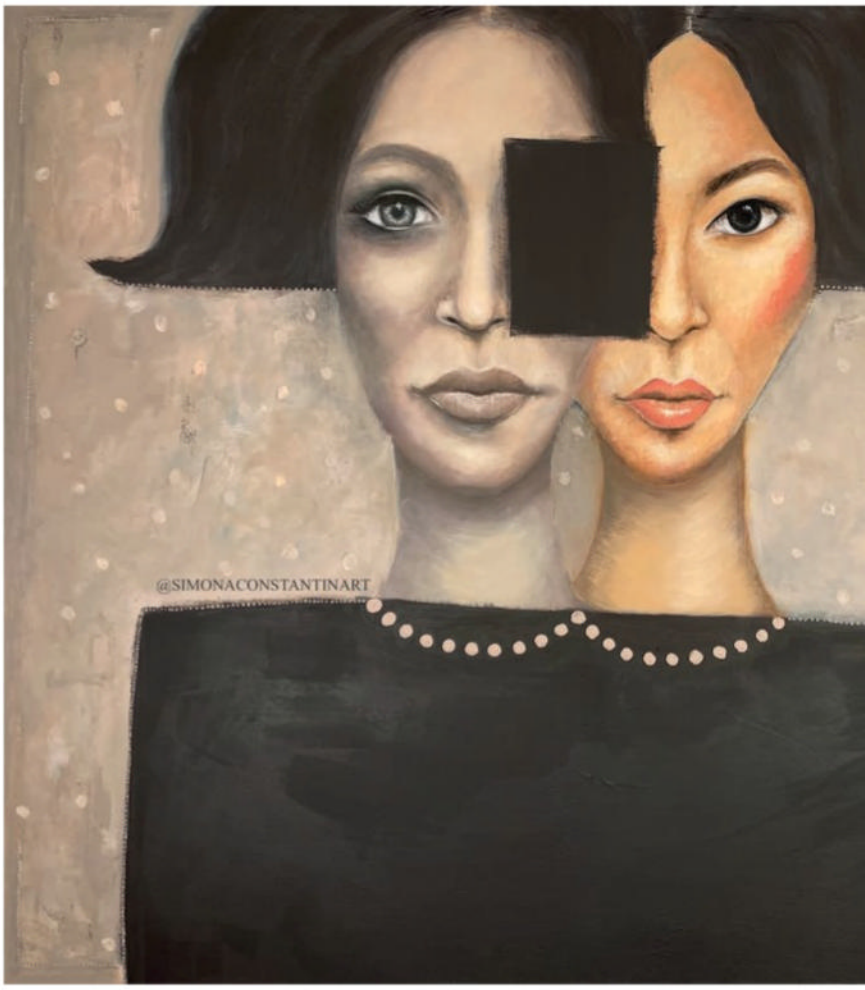


JONATHAN YEO, THE PRESERVING MACHINE

2

EMBRACE NEW TECHNIQUES ▲

Shake up your routine by exploring new techniques and mediums. Renowned artist Jonathan Yeo encourages experimentation, saying, "Don't be afraid to experiment and make mistakes; that's where the learning happens." Trying something unfamiliar – whether digital art, sculpture or a new painting style – can invigorate your creativity and expand your artistic voice.



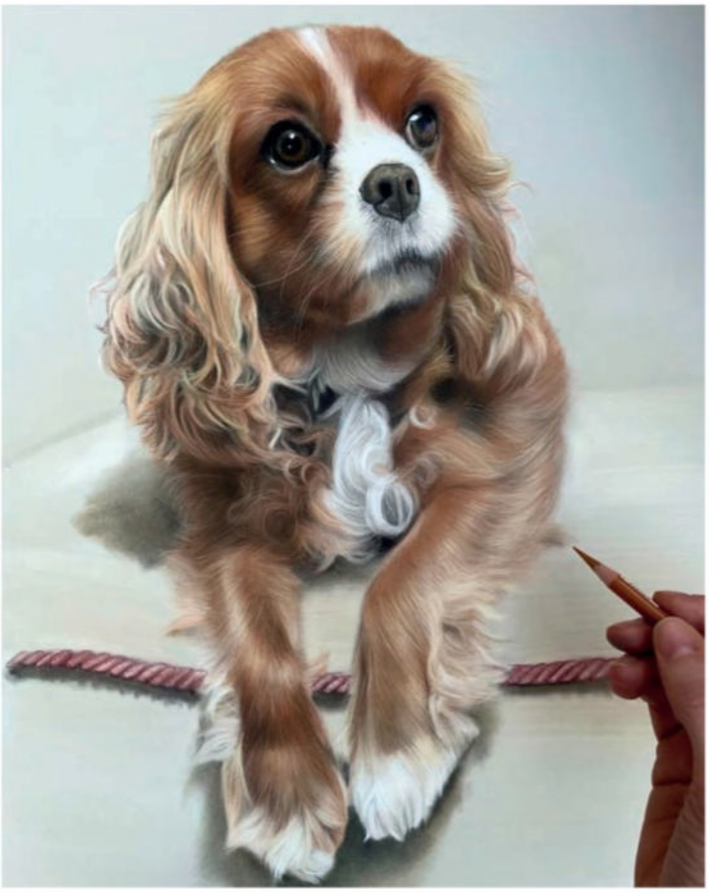
SIMONA CONSTANTIN, YEAR 2051

ions for 2025

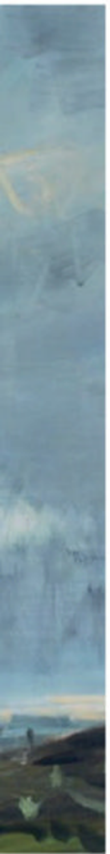
Refresh your approach with purposeful goals for a fulfilling year ahead

4 SHARE YOUR JOURNEY

Putting your work out into the world can foster rewarding connections. Pet portrait painter Amy McKimm recommends sharing not just your finished pieces, but also your process and thoughts, stating, "Social media is a great way to share your work with a large audience for free." By opening up about your journey, you create genuine connections with your audience, inviting them into the heart of your creative process.



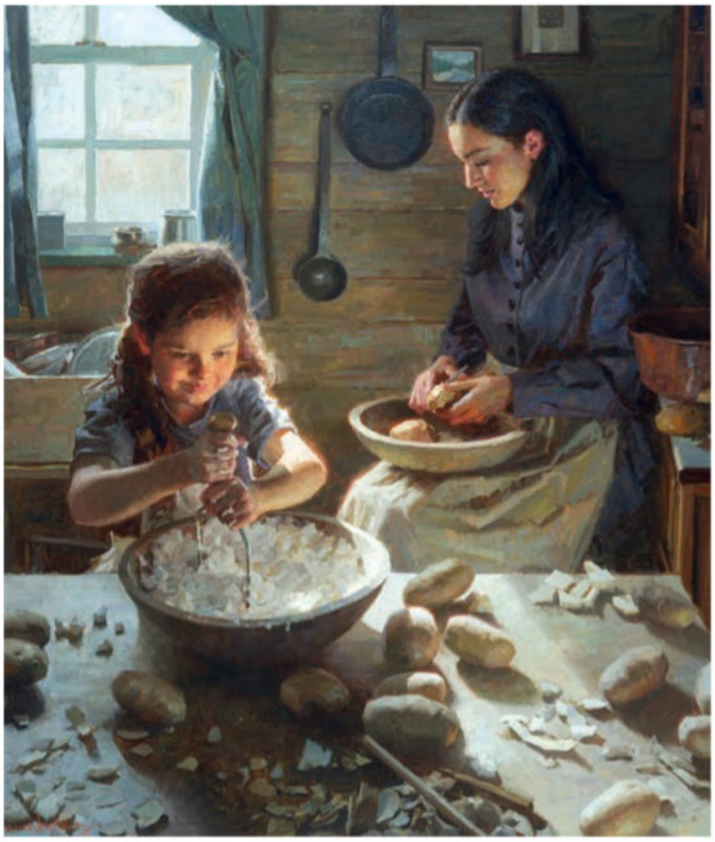
AMY MCKIMM, LILLY



LUCY MARKS, GLIMPSE OF THE SEA

3 FIND INSPIRATION OUTDOORS

The natural world can be a wellspring of ideas. For *en plein air* painter Lucy Marks, stepping outside is essential: "There is nothing better than standing out in the environment and catching the light and mood of the place." The UK's changing skies and shifting seasons provide an endless array of light and colours to explore. Let the unpredictability of nature offer new challenges and insights to your work this year.



MORGAN WEISTLING

5 MAKE TIME FOR DAILY PRACTICE

Consistency is key in any creative field. Illustrator-turned-artist Morgan Weistling advises, "Create a routine; consistency breeds progress." Whether it's a quick sketch or a longer session, regular practise helps build skill and momentum. Developing a daily or weekly routine, however small, can bring a sense of accomplishment and keep your skills sharp.

These artist-inspired resolutions can bring fresh focus to your creative goals. Embrace experimentation, build connections, establish a routine, share your journey and find inspiration in the natural world – each step could open new doors in your artistic practice for 2025. ☐

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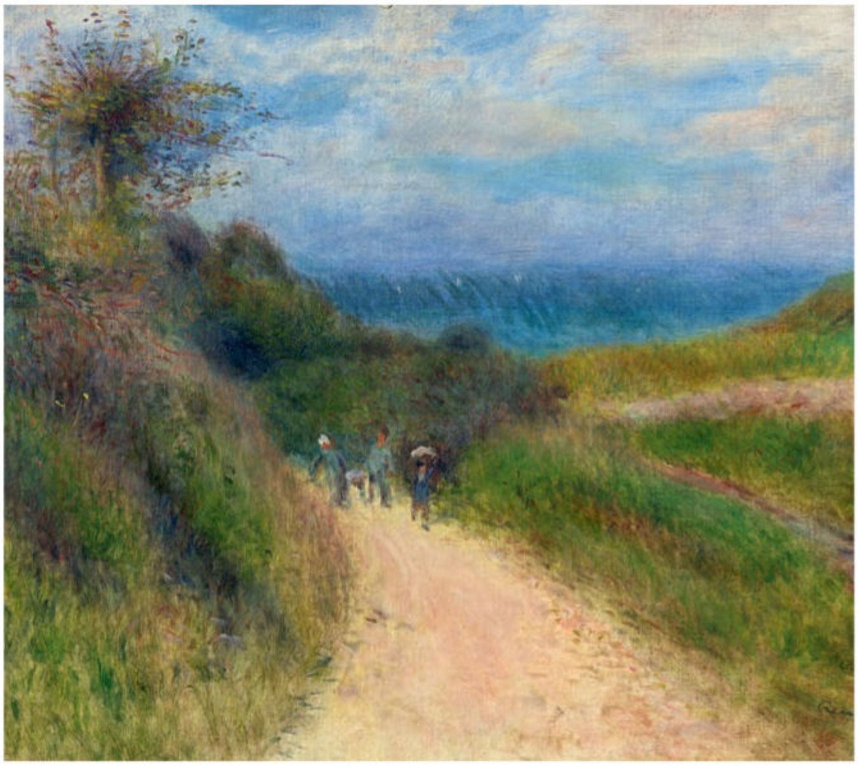


PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR, ROAD TO BERNEVAL, CA. 1880, OIL ON CANVAS, 50X61CM. DAUBERVILLE / DAUBERVILLE 100, HASSO PLATTNER COLLECTION © SAMMLUNG HASSO PLATTNER, POTSDAM

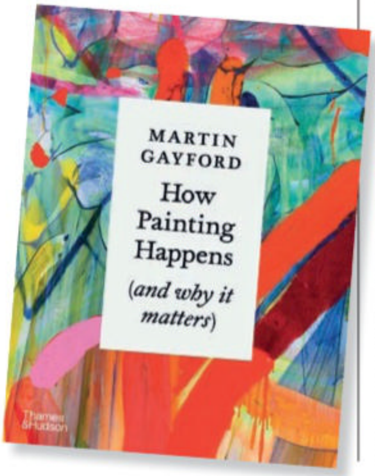
Explore... *Impressionist Places Revealed in Paintings and Photographs*, an art book which offers a unique look at the Impressionist legacy, exploring how their light-filled landscapes resonate today. Inspired by the Barberini Museum's collection, photographer Christoph Irrgang visited European locations immortalised in Impressionist works to capture the effects of time. From Monet's *Port of Le Havre* to Renoir's *Louveciennes*, readers journey through time with GPS coordinates marking each historic site, blending past and present. ***Prestel, £27.50***

BOOK OF THE MONTH

HOW PAINTING HAPPENS (AND WHY IT MATTERS)

Martin Gayford

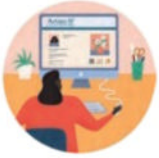
This book explores the ancient yet vibrant world of painting, a medium that still captivates after thousands of years. This profusely illustrated book reveals painting's paradoxes, creating new worlds for us to inhabit. Gayford combines voices of past and present artists, offering a fresh perspective. As he notes, "Painters often speak eloquently about the art that obsesses and engages them." ***Thames & Hudson, £35.00***



Reader offer

Secure your place on Marilyn Allis' Watercolour TRIO break (24–28 March 2025) and receive a free gift of Chinese art materials worth over £120! Set in a stunning Bournemouth studio overlooking the sea, this unique painting break offers guidance from professional artists Genevieve Lavers, Paul Matthews and Podi Lawrence. With diverse techniques and inspiring scenery, you'll not only spark creativity but also rejuvenate your art practice. Book now with a small deposit and quote ARTISTS&ILLUSTRATORS to claim your free gift. ***marilynallis.com***

Join us online!



There's a ton of art inspiration amongst these pages. But if you're looking for more? Find it on the fabulous *Artists & Illustrators* website. It's one of the best digital resources for artists from every realm, whilst the refreshing redesign makes our practical guides, competitions and interviews even more insightful. See you there. ***artistsandillustrators.co.uk***

THE DIARY

Open calls, prizes and artist opportunities

2 DECEMBER
Enter Wales Contemporary for a chance to win part of the £15,000+ prize fund. Open to global artists. Entry fee starts from £15. ***artopps.co.uk***

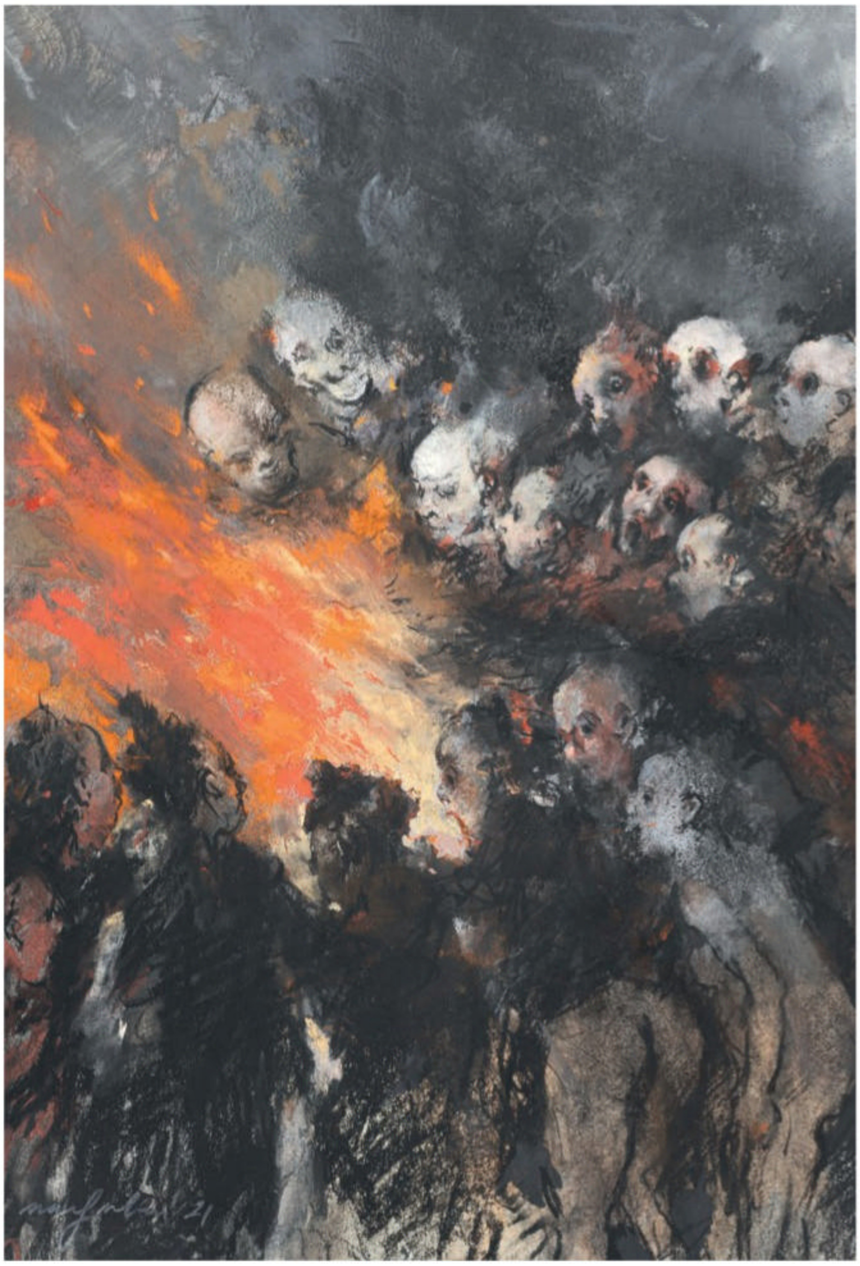
8 JANUARY
Submit your art, prints or sculptures for the Royal Society of British Artists Annual Exhibition. Prize fund totals over £18,000. Entry fee from £14. ***mallgalleries.org.uk***

9 JANUARY
Artists of all ages are invited to submit their art and design work to the David Gentleman Gallery Open Exhibition. It's £5 to enter. ***thedavidgentlemangallery.co.uk***

15 JANUARY
Paint an image from Raw Umber Studios image library for the chance to win £1000. Open to all. Winner announced 22 January. ***rawumberstudios.com/image-prize***

Exhibitions

THE BEST ART SHOWS TO VISIT FROM THIS MONTH ONWARDS



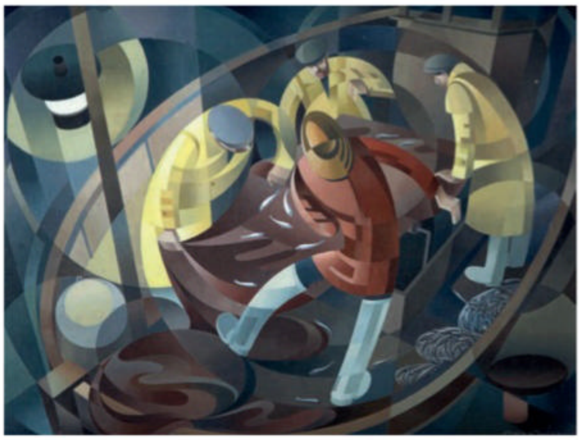
THE WITCHES' CAULDRON: MACBETH ACT 3, LYRIC OPERA, CHICAGO, DIRECTOR SIR DAVID MCVICAR, 2021 GOUACHE, CRAYON, PASTEL AND WASH ON PAPER

JOHN MACFARLANE AND THE ART OF THEATRICAL DESIGNS

Until 20 April 2025

A new exhibition showcasing the dramatic and dark designs of John Macfarlane is open now at Gainsborough's House. *John Macfarlane and the Art of Theatrical Designs* will feature 21 drawings from the renowned designer's five-decade career, highlighting his unique style that has shaped major ballet and opera productions worldwide. From *Swan Lake* to *Tosca*, Macfarlane's work defies traditional stage design with its bold, eerie tones, offering visitors a glimpse into the creative process behind these iconic performances.

Gainsborough's House, 46 Gainsborough St, Sudbury CO10 2EU. gainsborough.org



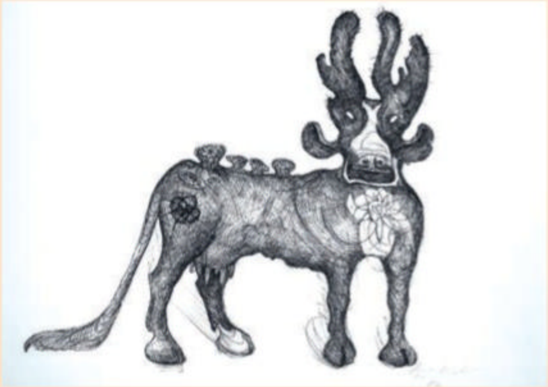
SHAKING OUT THE NETS BY WYN GEORGE (1910-1985) © THE BOX

PLANET OCEAN

Until 27 April 2025

This show examines our crucial relationship with the sea, focusing on Plymouth, known as 'Britain's Ocean City.' It delves into pivotal moments in history and the present, highlighting Plymouth Sound's significance as a key site for marine research. Addressing themes of plankton, pollution, people and planet, it presents essential findings and narratives that inspire action.

The Box, Plymouth PL4 8AX. theboxplymouth.com



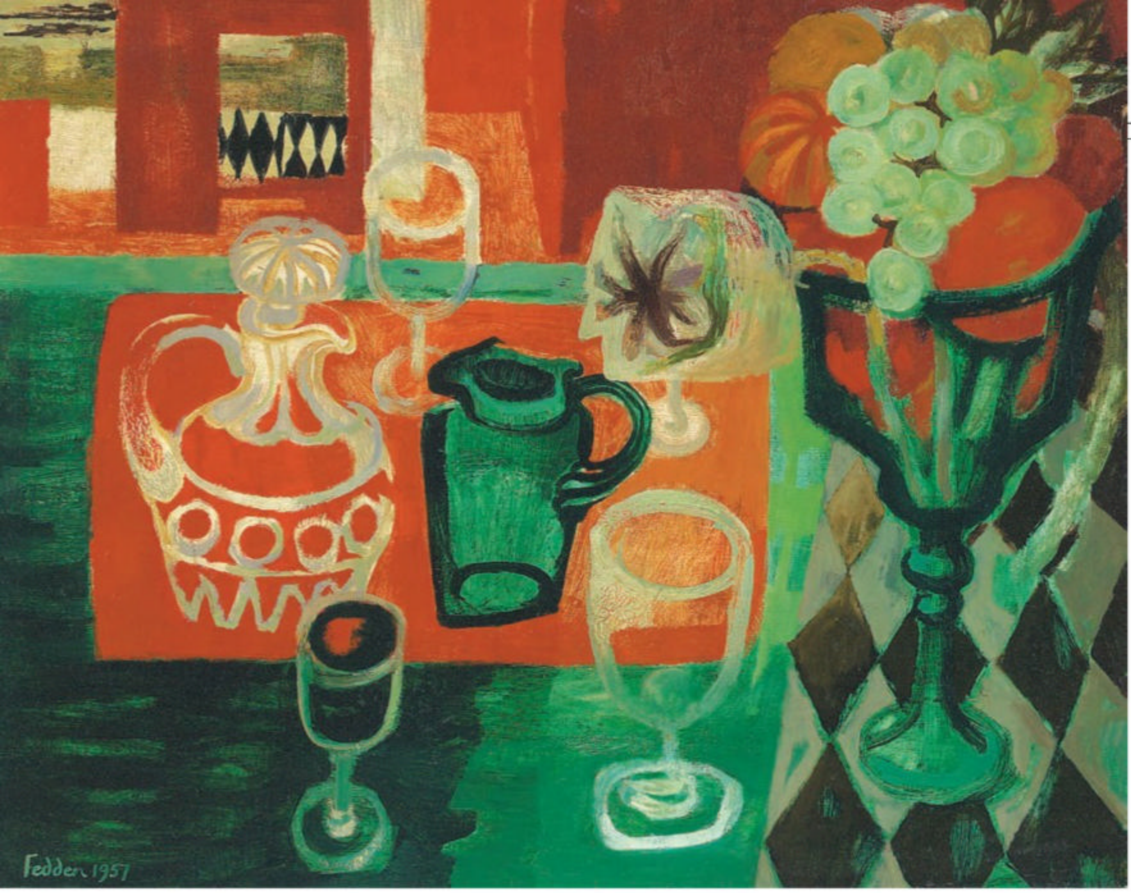
© CACTUS COW, BY LEONORA CARRINGTON, 1974, THE PENROSE COLLECTION

LEONORA CARRINGTON: AVATARS & ALLIANCES

Until 23 February 2025

This exhibition delves into the extraordinary worlds of the British-Mexican artist and her artistic friends. The show celebrates the 50th anniversary of her surrealist novel *The Hearing Trumpet* and features over 70 artworks, including rarely seen paintings, drawings and prints, alongside artefacts and archive material.

Firstsite, Colchester CO1 1JH. firstsite.uk



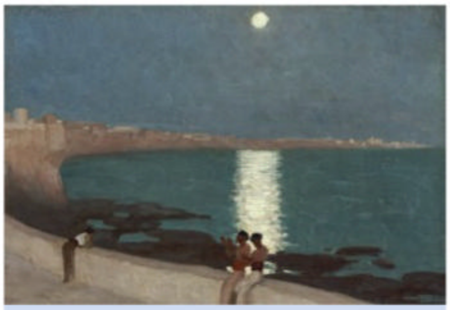
MARY FEDDEN, R.A. ORANGE AND GREEN STILL LIFE, 1957. OIL ON CANVAS. INGRAM COLLECTION

IMMORTAL APPLES, ETERNAL EGGS

Until 16 March 2025

This display brings together two of the UK's most important collections: The Ingram Collection and the David and Indrė Roberts Collection. Featuring works by prominent artists like Phyllida Barlow, Louise Bourgeois, Henry Moore and Sarah Lucas, the show juxtaposes contemporary sculpture, video and installation with traditional still life paintings. With over 50 artworks spanning the past century, it reimagines the genre of still life, exploring themes of transformation, consumption and mortality through a blend of bold, large-scale sculptures and evocative paintings.

Hastings Contemporary, Rock-a-Nore Rd, Hastings TN34 3DW. hastingscontemporary.org



FREDERIC LEIGHTON (1830-1896), BAY OF CADIZ, MOONLIGHT, C. 1866 (FRAMED). ©THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA (RBKC). IMAGE JARON JAMES

LEIGHTON AND LANDSCAPE: IMPRESSIONS FROM NATURE

Until 27 April 2025

Leighton and Landscape: Impressions from Nature is the first exhibition dedicated to the landscape sketches of Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830-1896) at his former home and studio, Leighton House. The show offers a fresh perspective on the celebrated Victorian artist, revealing his spontaneous and experimental approach as he documented the people and places he encountered during his travels. Featuring over 60 *en plein air* paintings, many for the first time in over 120 years, the display includes the newly rediscovered *Bay of Cádiz, Moonlight* (1866).

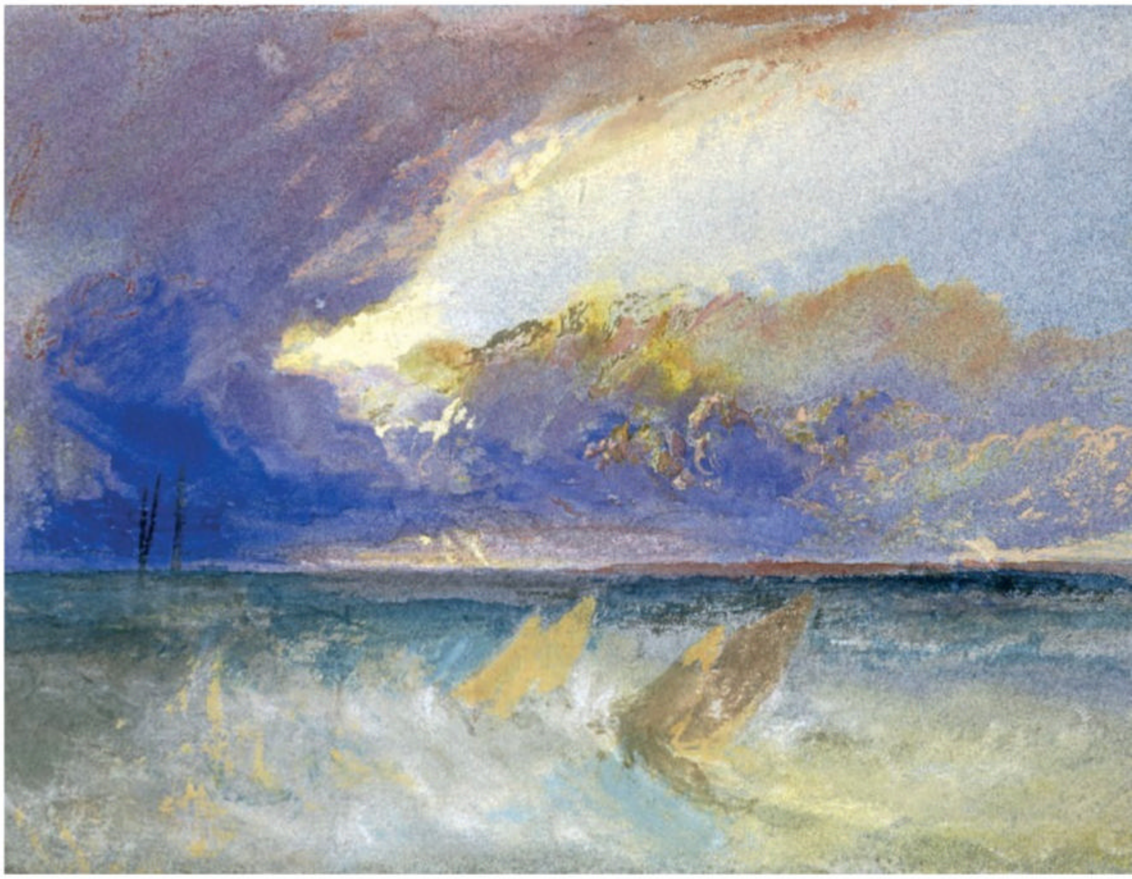
Leighton House, 12 Holland Park Road, W14 8LZ. rbkc.gov.uk/museums

TURNER'S WATERCOLOURS: SCOTLAND'S VAUGHAN BEQUEST

1 to 31 January 2025

In celebration of J.M.W. Turner's 250th anniversary, the National Gallery of Ireland embarks on a remarkable exchange with the National Galleries of Scotland. Starting January 2025, 38 exquisite Turner watercolours from the Vaughan Bequest will be showcased at the National Gallery of Ireland, while the Scottish galleries will present the Irish collection in the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh. This collaborative effort allows visitors to experience a fresh selection of Turner's watercolours, highlighting the legacy of collector Henry Vaughan. After years of planning, this exhibition reflects Vaughan's commitment to sharing art and culture across borders.

National Gallery of Ireland Merrion Square West Dublin, Ireland D02 K303. ngi.ie. National Galleries of Scotland, The Royal Scottish Academy, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL. nationalgalleries.org



JMW TURNER, SEA VIEW. NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND

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derwentart.com/en-gb ☐

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DRAWING
24

THE PRIZE

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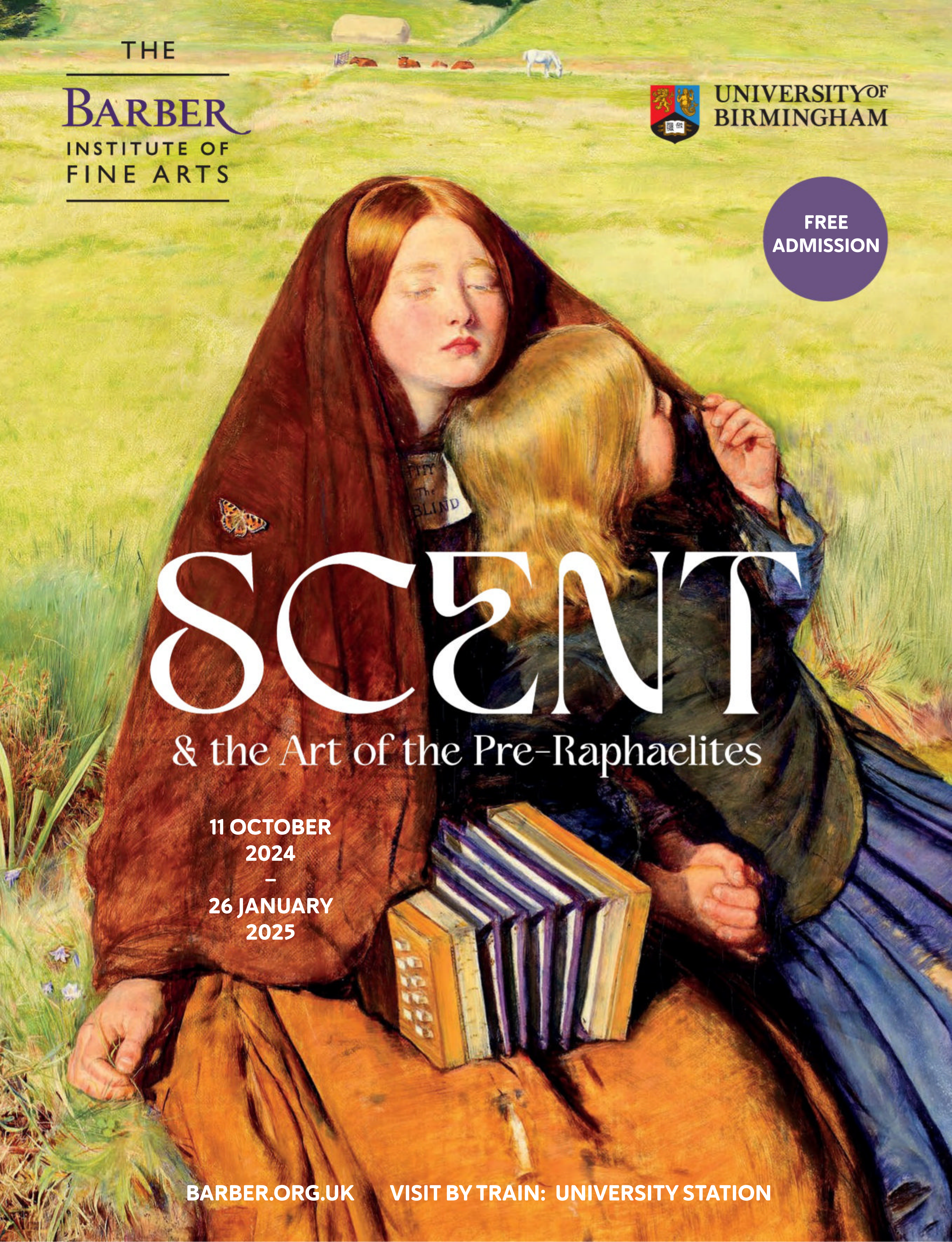

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ISTOCK/NADIA BOROVENKO

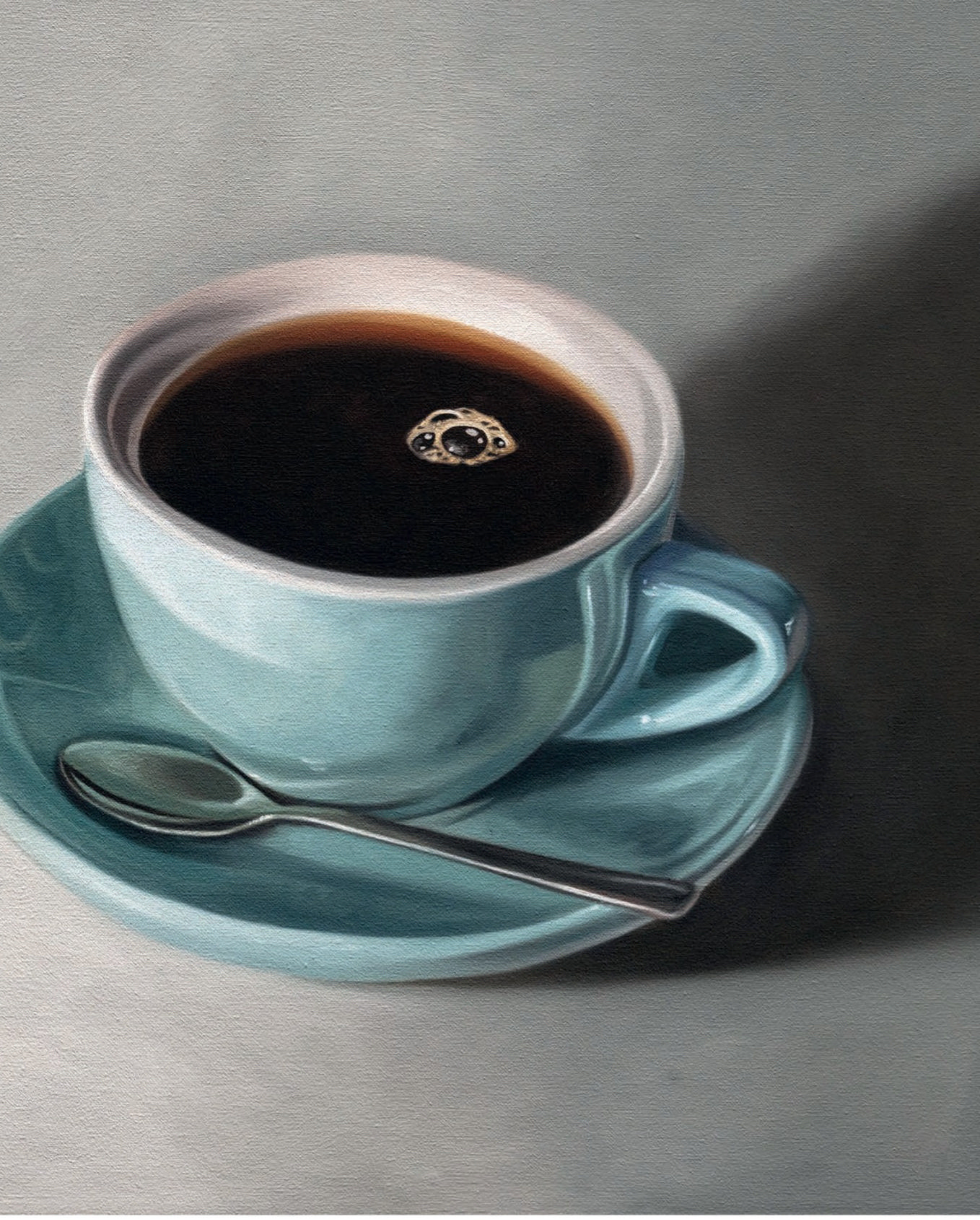
Lauren Pretorius

This artist transforms ordinary objects into extraordinary works, evoking nostalgia and sparking joy. *Ramsha Vistro* finds out more

Lauren Pretorius grew up in a small Midwestern town in the United States, where art was entwined into her upbringing. Her mother, always sketching, inspired Lauren with beautiful landscapes and portraits. "I spent much of my childhood immersed in art," she recalls, attributing her artistic development to a supportive family and school environment. This nurturing foundation taught her to spot the subtle beauty in everyday life, a lesson that continues to influence her work.

The artist's connection to nature was evident from a young age. "I loved painting nature and wildlife," she says, often drawing inspiration from her surroundings. An early victory in ▶

***Carribbean Blue Cup*, oil on canvas, 30.5x30.5cm**

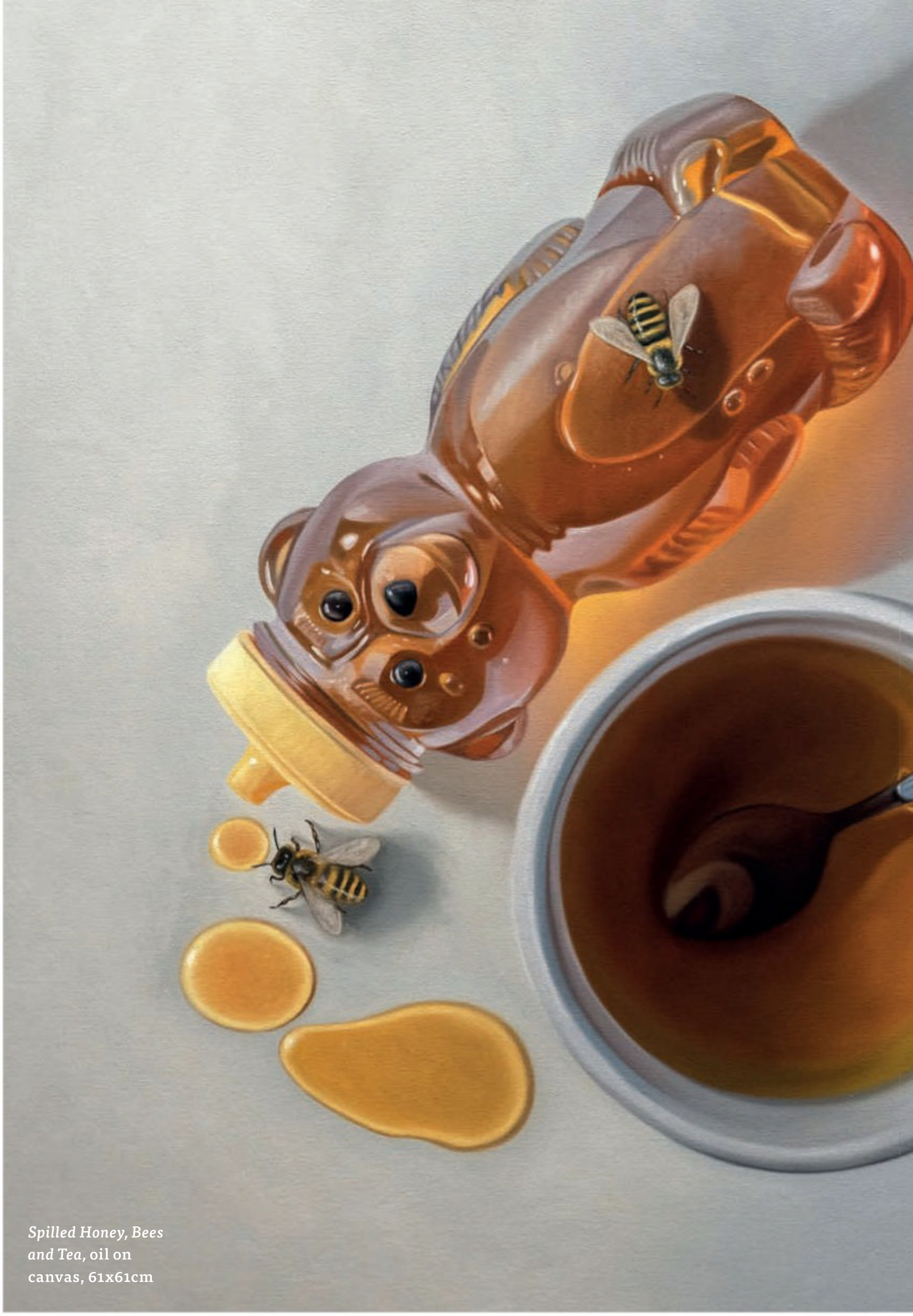


an art competition at school drove her passion further. "That recognition gave me the motivation to keep pushing myself," she explains. This drive for exploration led her to dabble in various subjects, from wildlife to still life, constantly experimenting to develop her unique style. "Every time I paint, I learn something new; it's a continuous journey," she affirms.

Her artistic evolution has been a long journey of practice and experimentation. "For more than 20 years now, I've been painting regularly, always learning and refining my approach," she notes. Each painting has been a learning experience, making continuous exploration a significant influence on her work. "I see every canvas as an opportunity, not just to express myself, but to challenge myself," she adds, highlighting her dedication to artistic growth.

Lauren honed her skills at Northern State University in South Dakota, where she studied Fine Arts."Those four years were foundational for me," she states. The technical skills and confidence she gained from her teachers helped her see art in new ways. "While my style has certainly evolved since then, those early lessons are still very much a part of my practice today." She credits her education with not just teaching her techniques but also instilling the importance of integrity. "Art is not just about technique; it's about the stories we tell through our work," she insists, underlining the deeper connection art can foster.

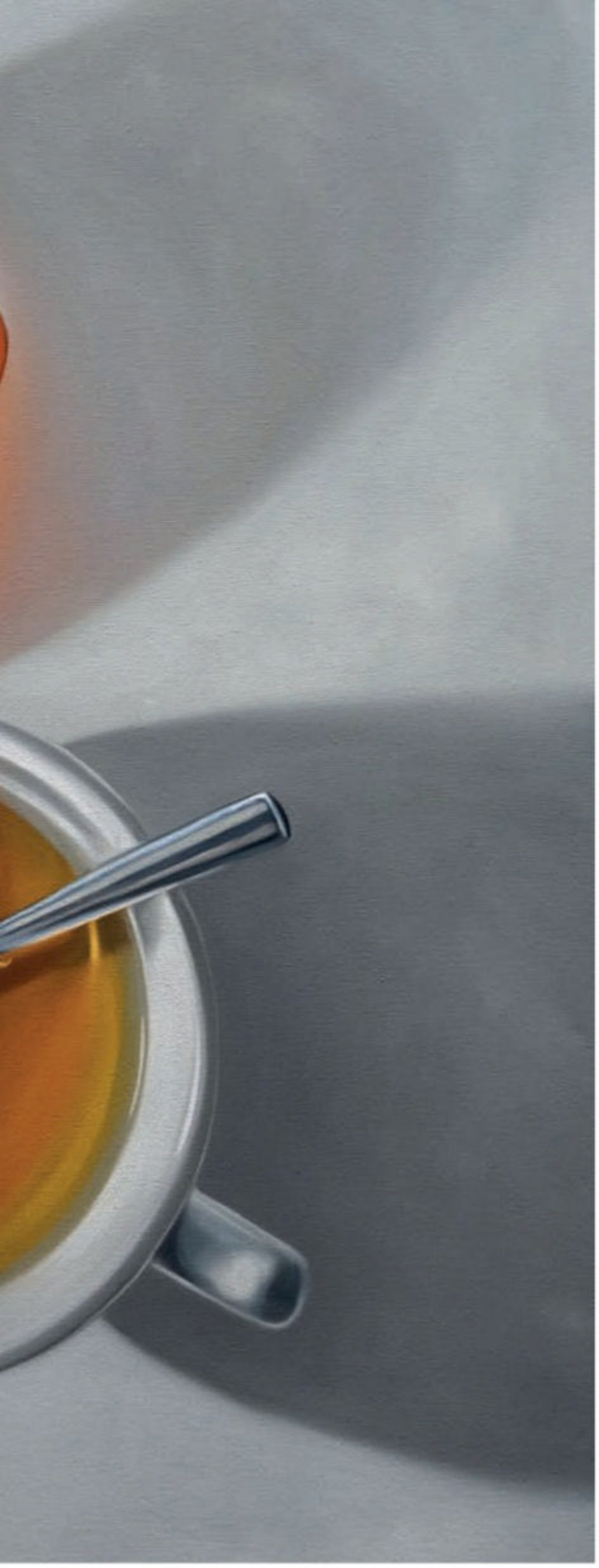
After graduating, Lauren took a full-time job that wasn't directly related to art but didn't let it hinder her creativity. "I continued painting on weekends and sharing my work on social media," she shares. Gradually, she built a following, and after a decade of juggling both work and art, she made the leap to pursue her passion full-time. "That was around six years ago and I've loved every minute of it," she says, her enthusiasm evident. The turning point came when she realised social media's potential to connect her with a global audience. "It opened doors I hadn't anticipated, turning my passion into a full-time career," she states, reflecting on her transformative journey.

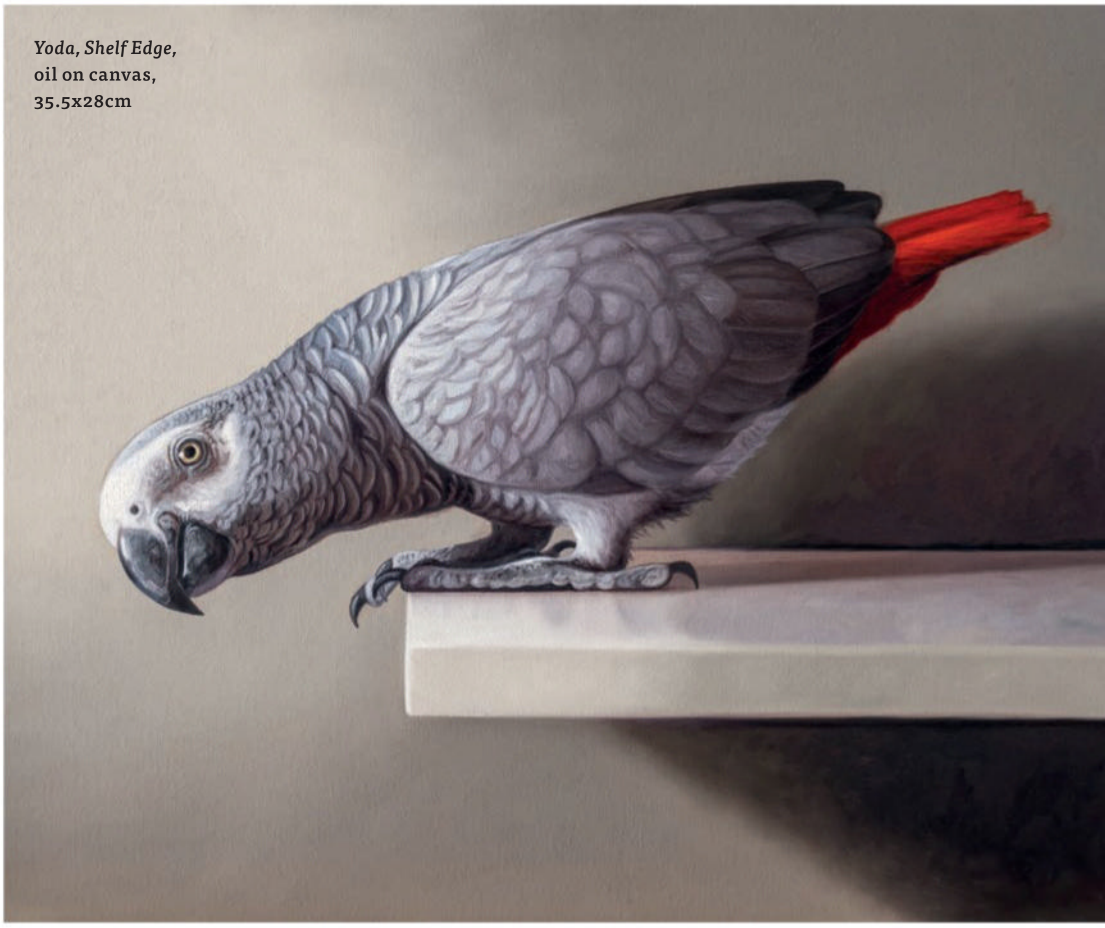

Spilled Honey, Bees and Tea, oil on canvas, 61x61cm

While Lauren doesn't have a strict ritual before beginning a painting, she emphasises the importance of planning. "I spend time setting up the composition," she explains. Once satisfied with the arrangement, she jumps right in. Her studio plays a crucial role in this process – a creative space where she can focus and draw inspiration from. "The atmosphere of the studio, combined with the subjects I'm working with, guides the tone of the piece," she notes. "While my studio is simple, it's filled with items I love, like books and small pops of colour that make it feel cosy. It feels like a second home, where ideas can breathe and develop," she remarks, appreciating the freedom her space provides.

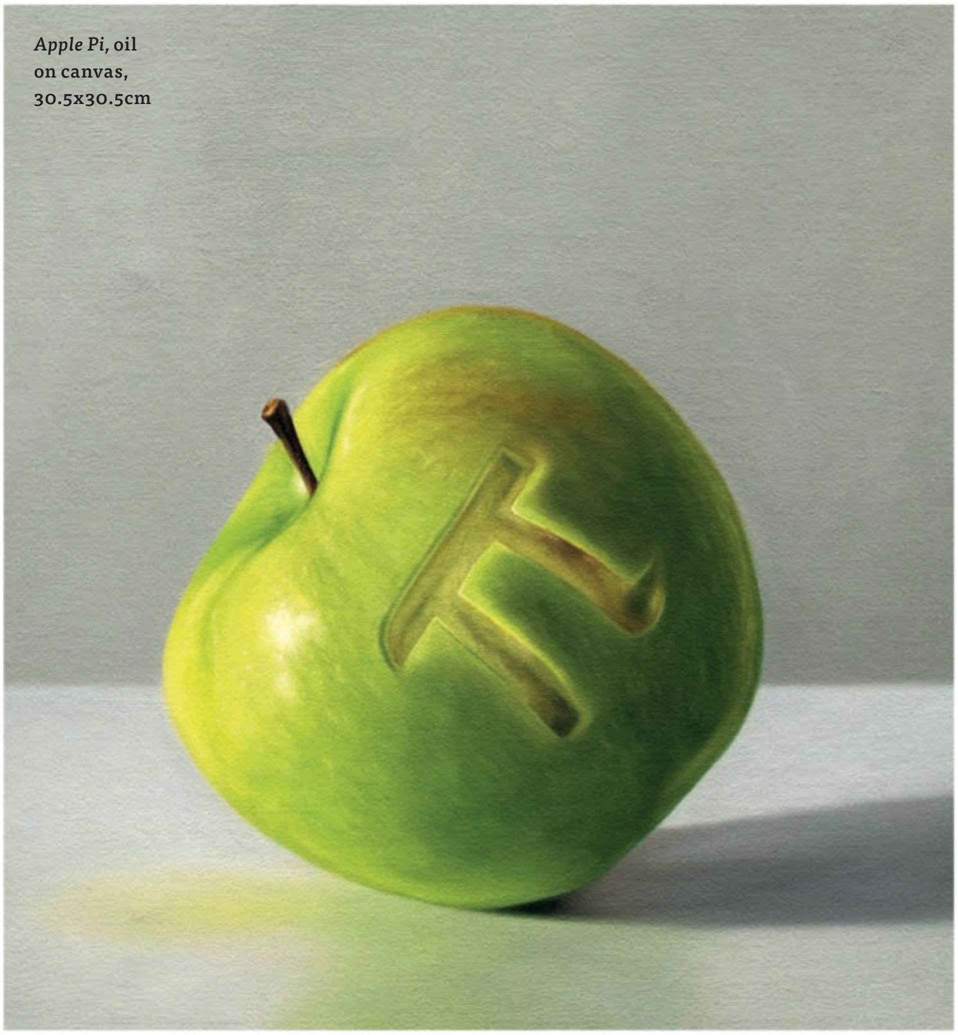
She adds, "One of the most essential elements in my studio is actually my TV. I love having movies, music or audiobooks playing in the background. It creates an atmosphere that allows me to focus on my work while enjoying some background noise, which I find comforting and motivating." The neutral whites and greys in her studio are accented by knickknacks and artificial plants. "The greenery is especially uplifting during Midwest winters," bringing warmth and comfort to the space. Lighting also plays a key role. "I have a large window by my easel that provides lovely natural light," she says. When needed, she uses an LED panel with a natural daylight spectrum. "This is crucial for capturing values in my paintings," says Lauren, ensuring her studio is always perfectly lit for her work.

In her early days, the artist was captivated by the simplicity of everyday objects. "I would take anything from around the house – from kitchen items and decor to just random objects – and play with lighting and shadows to bring out their beauty," she recalls. This practice led her to embrace still life painting as a way to express herself. "The challenge of transforming something ordinary into





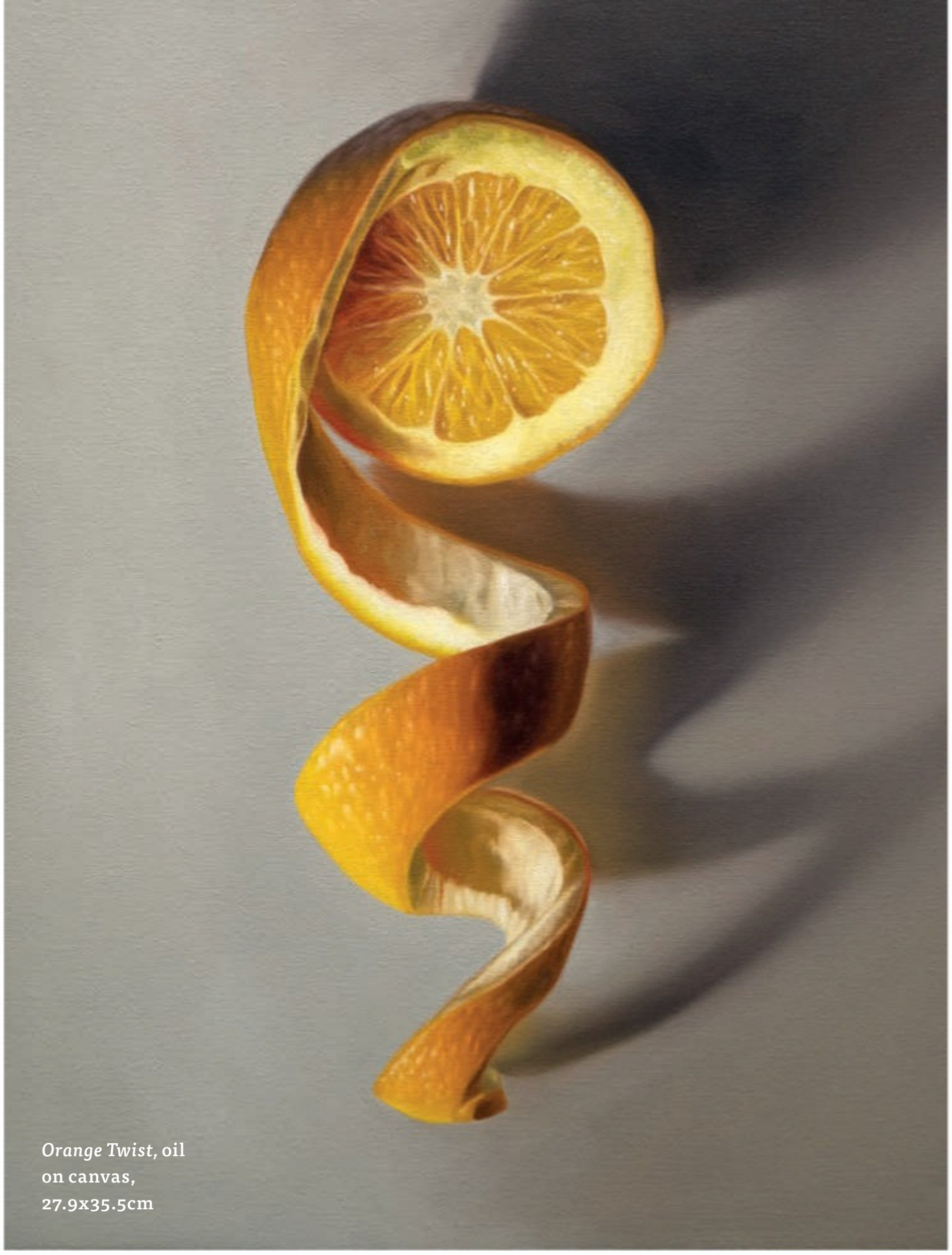
Yoda, Shelf Edge, oil on canvas, 35.5x28cm



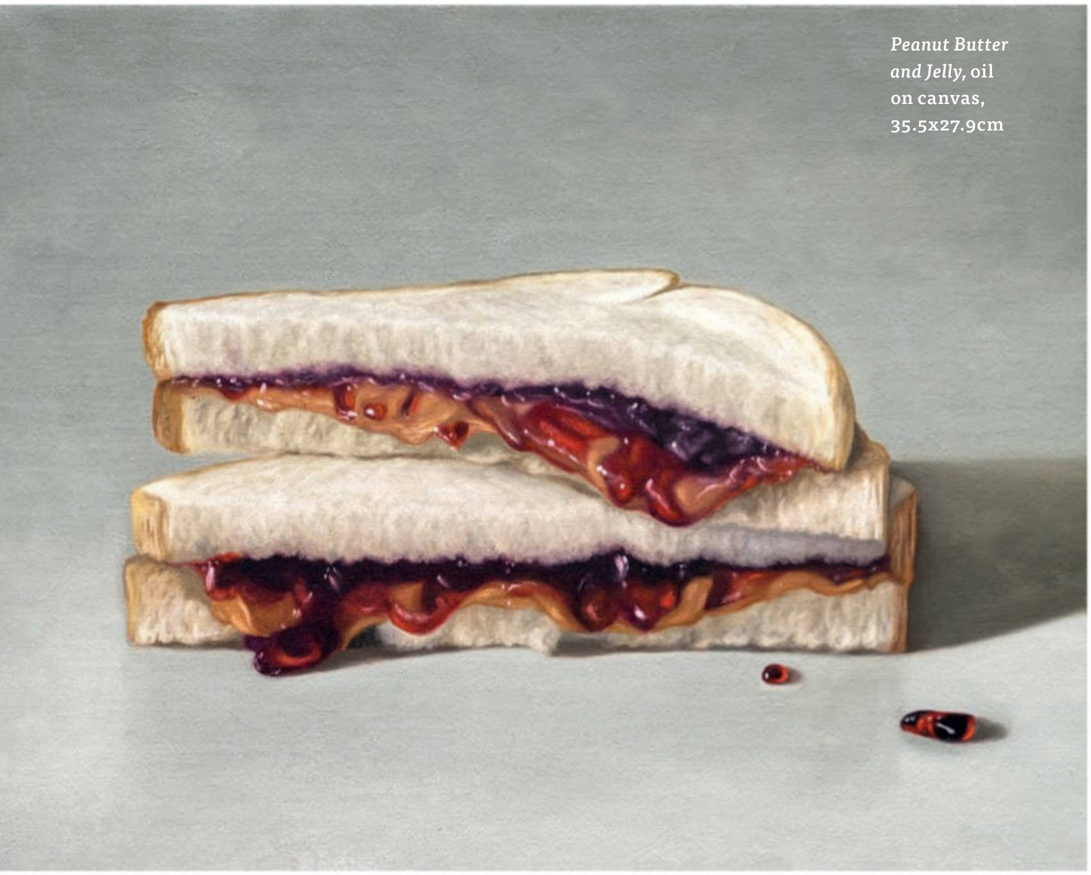
Apple Pi, oil on canvas, 30.5x30.5cm

something extraordinary became a core part of my artistic identity," she smiles. Lauren believes that even the simplest items can tell profound stories. "There's always a narrative in the objects we overlook," she adds, inviting viewers to consider the depth behind common items.

She also believes everyday objects hold nostalgic power. One of her favourite subjects was a humble peanut butter and jelly sandwich. "To some, it's just an ordinary sandwich, but for many, it brings back memories of childhood and the comfort of simpler times," she explains. The artist aims for viewers to appreciate these familiar items in a new light, recognising the beauty and significance they hold in their lives. "I want ▸



Orange Twist, oil on canvas, 27.9x35.5cm



Peanut Butter and Jelly, oil on canvas, 35.5x27.9cm

them to stop and reflect on their own experiences with something so simple," she expresses, demonstrating her intent to spark personal connections through her work.

Whimsy is another key element in Lauren's artwork. "While setting up still life compositions, I often find myself imagining certain objects interacting with each other; like cherries that seemed to be having a conversation," she says with a chuckle. These playful touches inject personality and light-heartedness into her pieces. Her love for nature and birdwatching also finds a way into her art, blending two passions seamlessly. "It's all about having fun with the process and letting my imagination run free," she adds. This interplay between nature and everyday life creates a delightful contrast in her work. "Nature has a way of adding vibrancy and life to the mundane," she points out, celebrating the rich narratives embedded within her subjects.

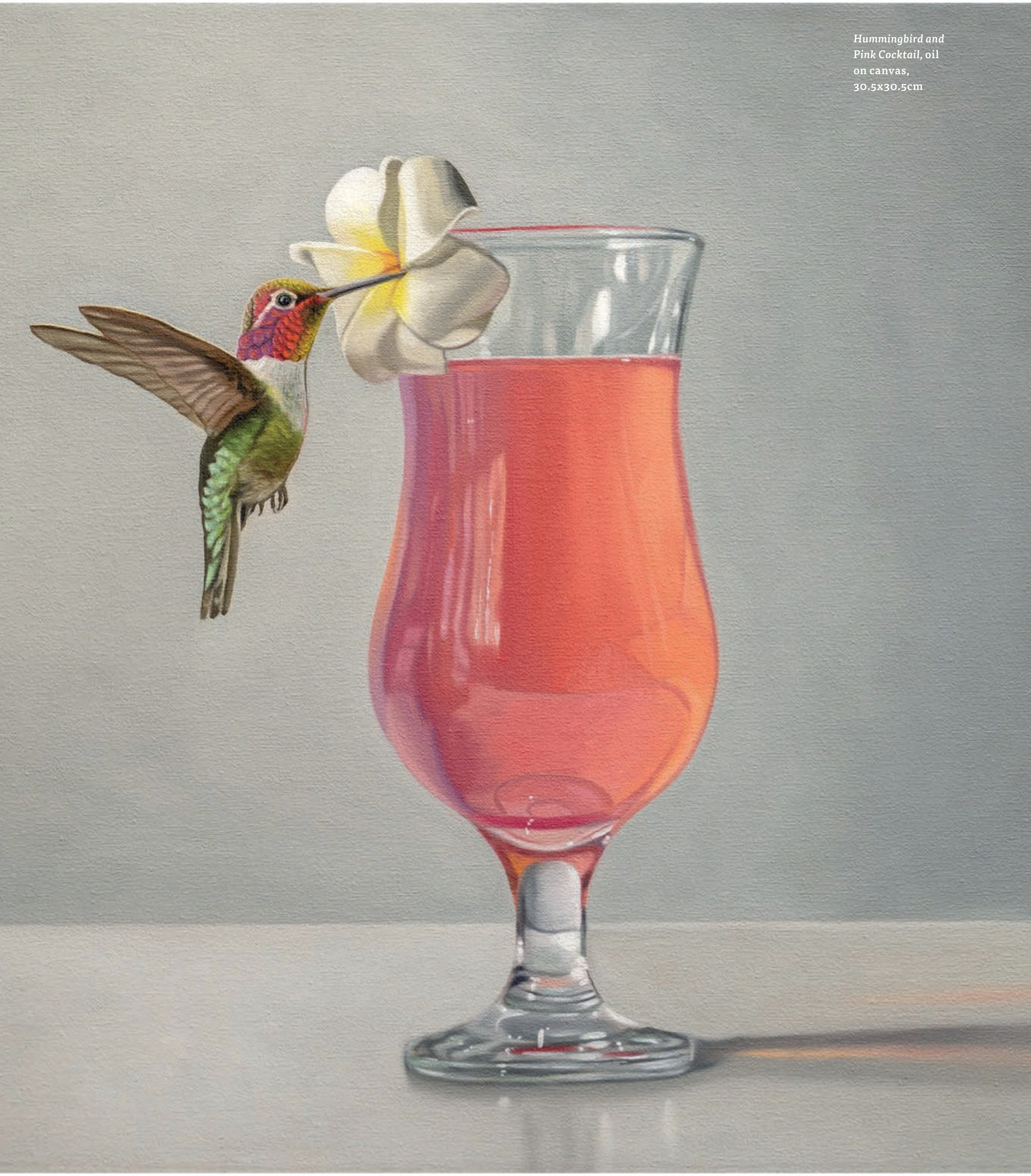
The emotional response from her audience is also important to Lauren. "When someone tells me that a painting reminded them of a cherished memory, it's incredibly rewarding," she says. "Those moments are memorable because they reiterate the power of art to connect us on a deeper level," she reflects. This emotional connection is what Lauren strives for in every piece. "If my work resonates with someone, I've done my job," she asserts, underscoring the purpose behind her creations.

Finding inspiration in everyday objects can be challenging, but Lauren has some tips. "Start by observing how light interacts with different objects: how shadows fall, how reflections change," she advises. Learning to see the world through this lens can uncover beauty in the mundane.

"When you take the time to truly notice your surroundings, inspiration will come naturally," Lauren insists. She encourages others to slow down, stating, "Life moves quickly; sometimes we need to pause to appreciate what's right in front of us." This philosophy encourages mindfulness, a theme reflected in her work.

On her art journey, Lauren says she believes that many artists share common ground. "In many ways, we artists are all the same; constantly searching for ways to express ourselves and connect with others through our work," she notes. What sets her apart, however, is her ability to blend nostalgia, humour and a touch of elegance in her paintings. "I want my viewers to find both familiarity and surprise in the objects I depict, helping them see the extraordinary in the ordinary," she concludes.

laurenpretorius.com □



Hummingbird and Pink Cocktail, oil on canvas, 30.5x30.5cm

HOW I MAKE IT WORK

Petra Börner

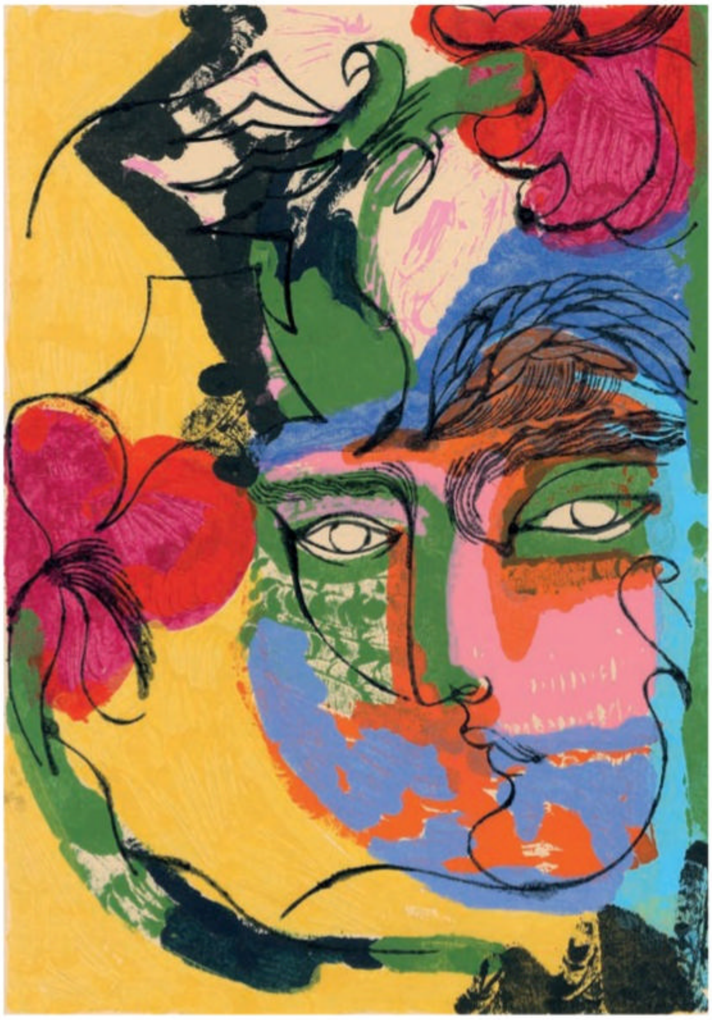
This artist and illustrator shares how she achieved success through hands-on craftsmanship and global collaborations

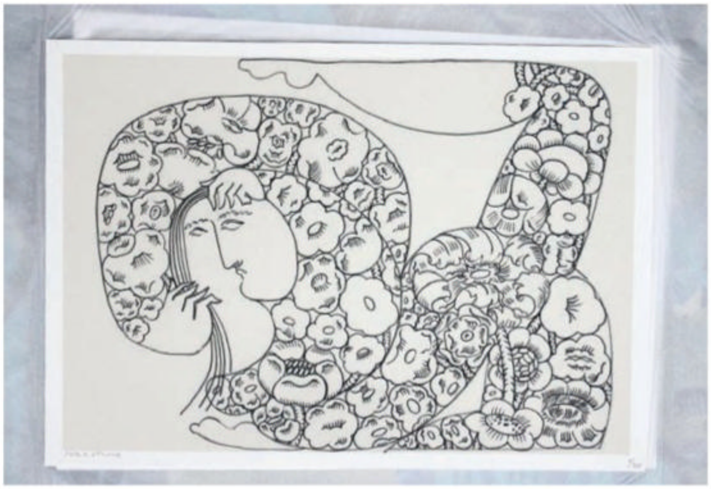
ANNIKA LUNDVALL

I learnt about crafts and practical techniques like sewing, painting and woodwork from my parents and aunts. I grew up in an era when looking after your things was more important than it is now. Skills spilled into problem-solving, but also generating creative ideas and making art. Using my hands to mend, tend or transform things and salvage found objects is something that still shapes my practice.

My first artistic job was to assist a local illustrator who worked in an old-fashioned way. He did not rely much on the computer but mounted his work by hand, so I learned plenty about collage-making and composition from him. I also worked with animation and making costumes before studying fashion design. Subsequently, commissions within the fashion industry creating prints and textile designs influenced my work as an illustrator and I still embrace working on really varied projects.

Making a living and being able to make the work I want to make without compromises is challenging. I work hard on finding clients and projects where my work can be how it is. To see my work take new forms; engaging and connecting with a new audience brings me joy, but I often debate and feel torn about what implications it may have. In my overall practice, I tend to feel pressed for time and it's a challenge to focus amidst many distractions. I have to be strict with time and not take on too many projects to manage, even when they seem so exciting.





TOP *Facepaint*, 29.5x42cm, ink and acrylic on found paper
ABOVE *Floral Dream*, 29.7x42, pencil on paper

PETRA'S TIPS ON BECOMING A FULL-TIME ARTIST

1

Spend most of your time making art and defining your 'handwriting'
Spending time repeatedly making, drawing and writing was my entry to finding mine.

2

Value your practice
I don't believe in rushing, but often work efficiently.

3

Keep active
It's important to be active and engaged in your work every single day.

Collaborations make me step out of personal space in different ways. At times it takes up most of my time, other times I work solely on personal projects for a while. I feel secure in my decision-making as an artist and I carry a strong sense of freedom through my Swedish roots. I'm profoundly grateful to feel that I can pursue what I want to do.
petraborner.com □

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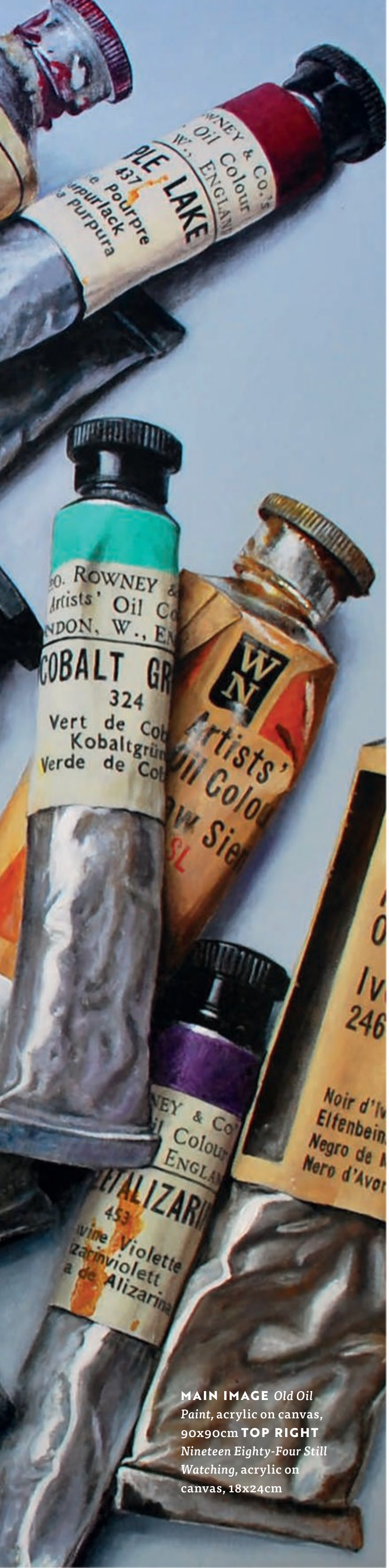
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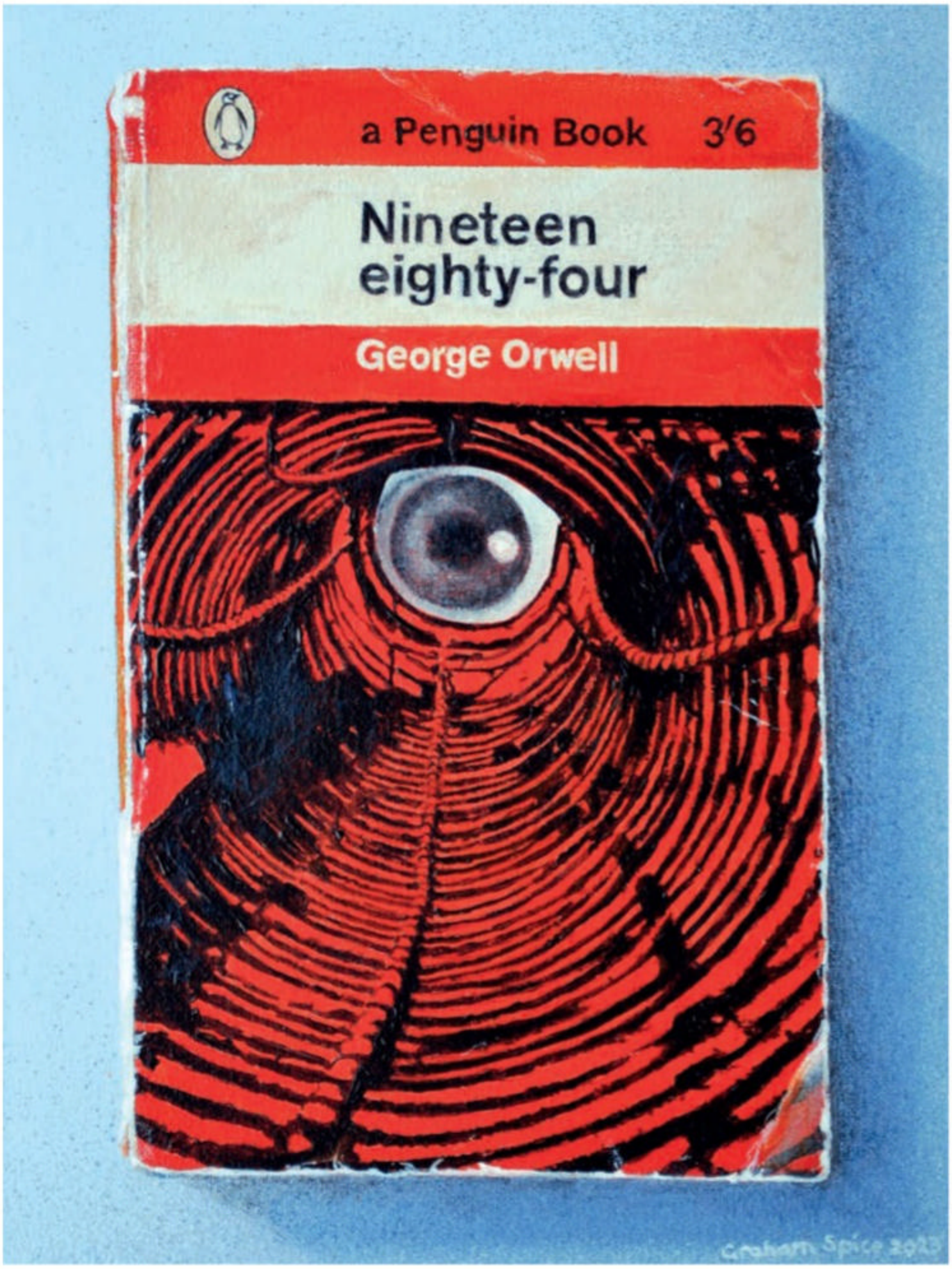
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Nineteen eighty-four
George Orwell
Graham Spice 2023

MAIN IMAGE *Old Oil Paint*, acrylic on canvas, 90x90cm **TOP RIGHT** *Nineteen Eighty-Four Still Watching*, acrylic on canvas, 18x24cm

Graham Spice

This still life artist tells *Sarah Edghill* about his love of lino printing, design and working with acrylic ▶

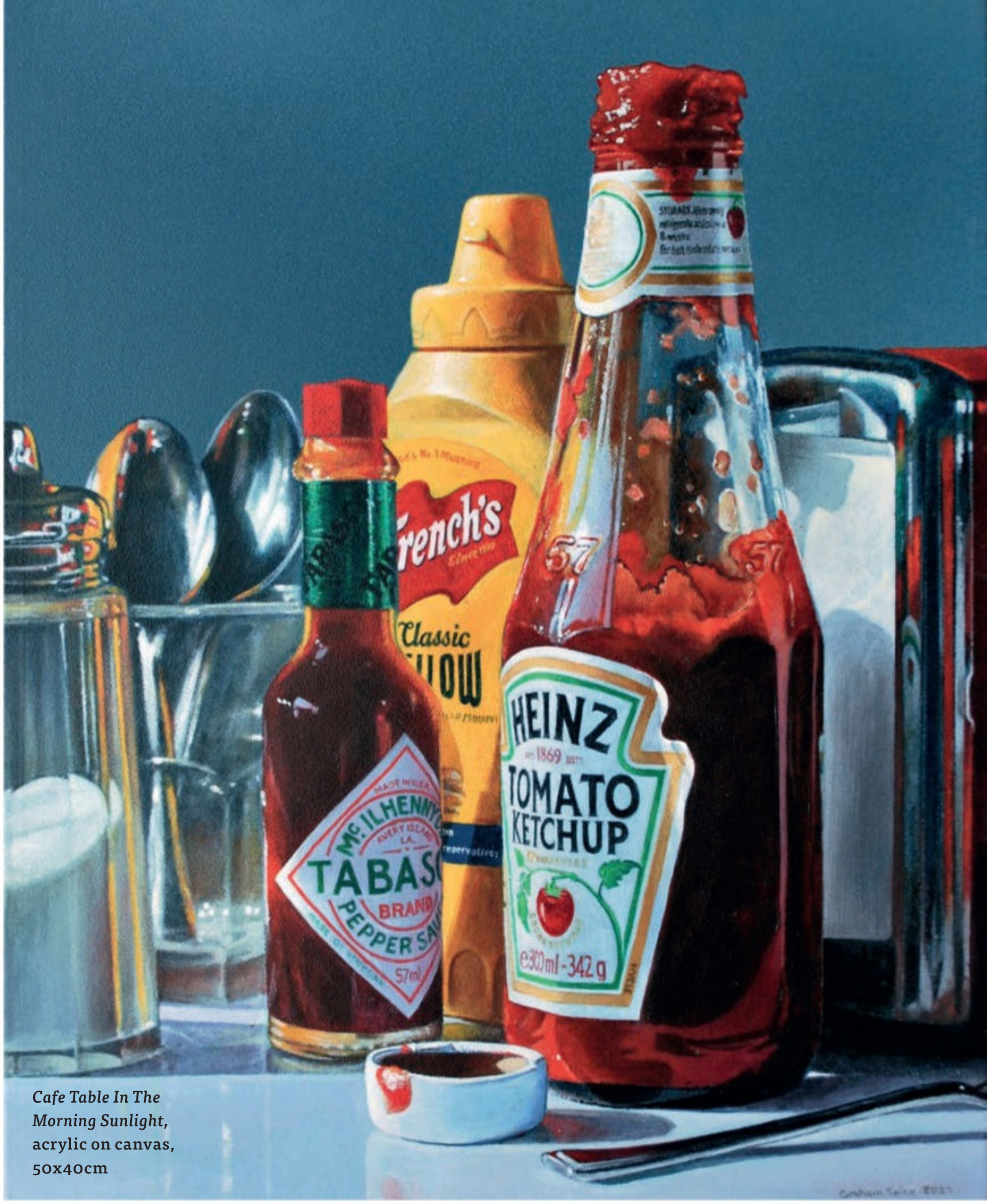
After studying at Medway College of Art, Graham Spice worked as a graphic designer in London for leading design groups with clients in Europe, the Middle East and the USA. He then began running his own agency. He now lives in Suffolk and specialises in still life where a selection of his work is available through the Aldeburgh Contemporary Arts Gallery. ***graham-spice-artist.com***

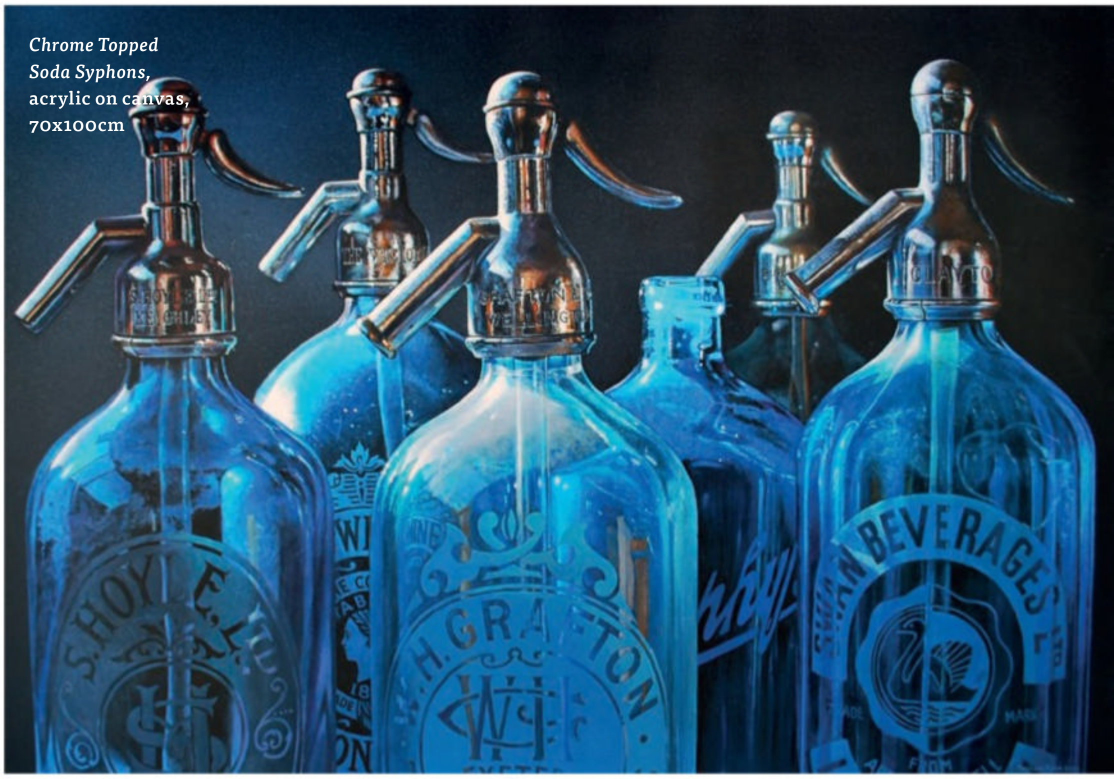
I had an amazing art teacher, who suggested I take extra lessons.
From then on, about a quarter of my time at secondary school was spent in the art room. That teacher even got me a place at Medway College of Art on Saturday mornings and, when I left school, I was accepted at Medway full time. After completing the foundation year, I decided to take the three-year graphic design course, while still keeping an interest in my painting and printing.

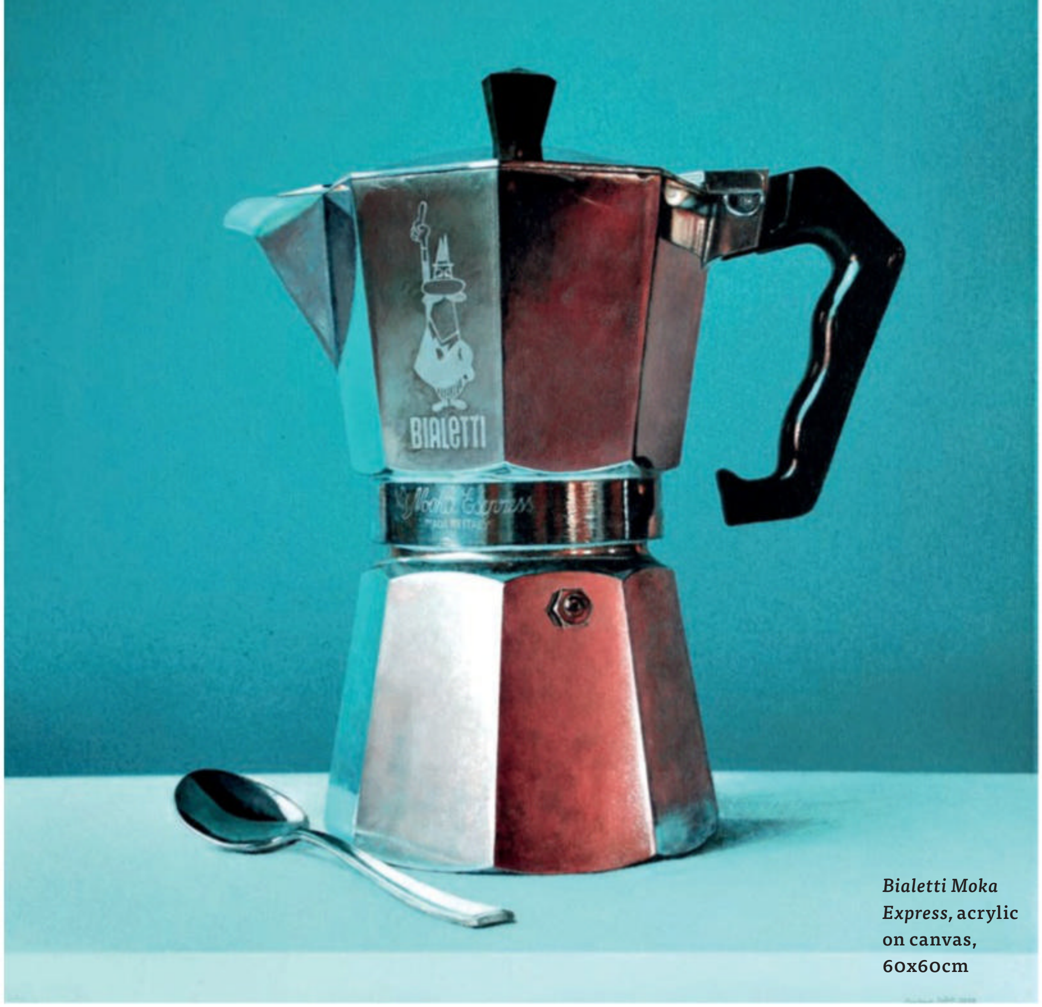
Before computers, graphic designers had to have manual skills.
Back in the 1970s and 1980s, when you designed a brochure or a piece of packaging, you had to produce a visual/mock-up to show the client exactly what it would look like. This is where I gained many of the skills I needed to produce very realistic images. Towards the later part of my career as a designer, I turned back to my first love of printing and painting.

Over the years I have evolved into a painter of still life.
We are surrounded by everyday objects, brands and products which I find fascinating. I collect and gather numerous objects and products and have them stacked in every corner of my studio, and these form the subject matter of my paintings. I start by setting up a still life; this can involve building a mini set, mocking things up to produce the whole scenario, from an American Diner table set-up to an interior of a cupboard, or just a simple product on its own. I like to use natural light and, as my style of realistic painting is not the fastest, I use photography to capture the moment when the lighting is right for the atmosphere I am creating, and it means I can also vary the positioning. I then base my painting on these photographic images, which allows me to choose the best composition and get the maximum amount of detail, which is an important feature of my work.

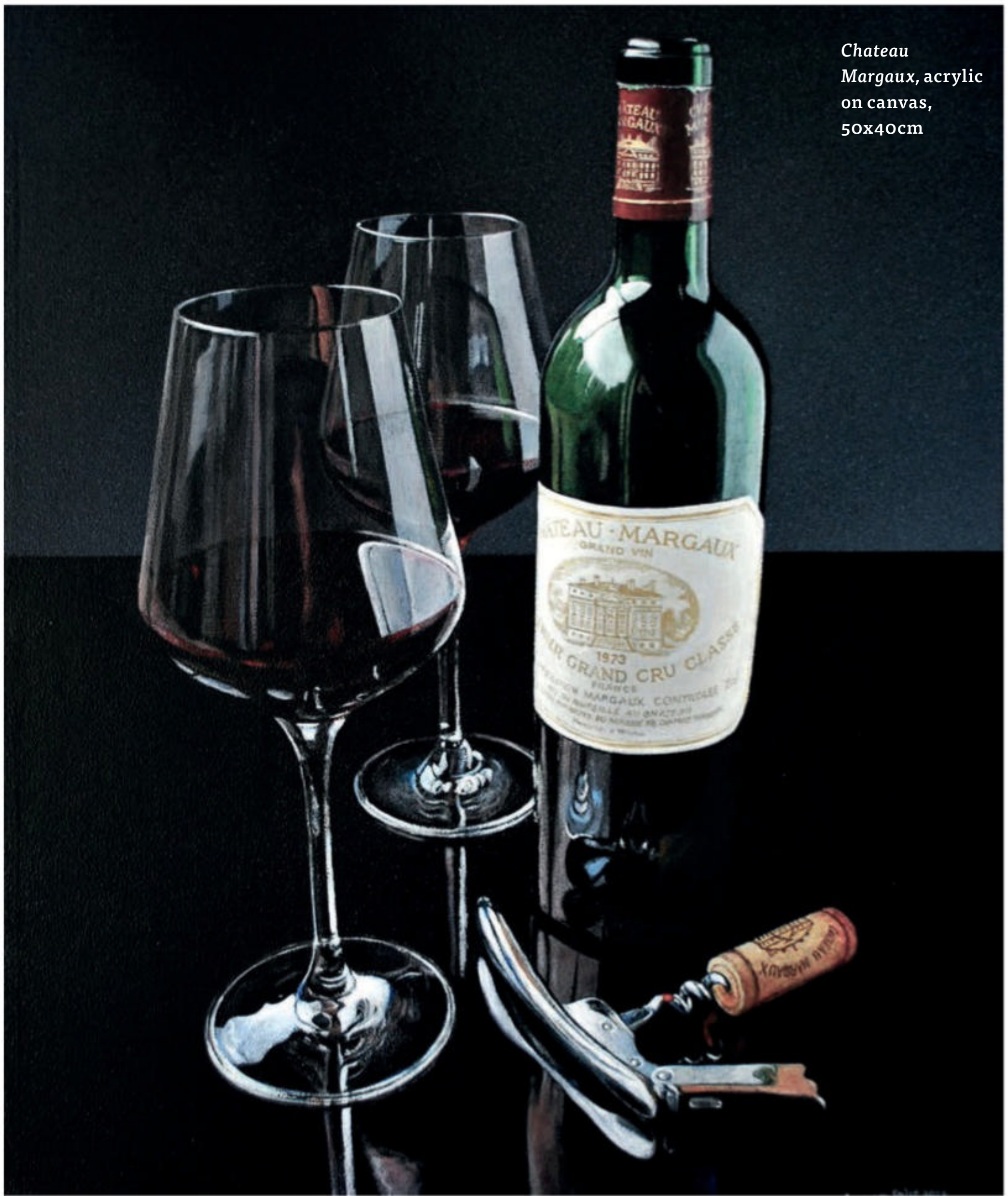
I love to portray the dents and scratches that life has left in it's wake.
I like painting glass and silver, metal objects


Cafe Table In The Morning Sunlight, acrylic on canvas, 50x40cm


Chrome Topped Soda Syphons, acrylic on canvas, 70x100cm



Bialetti Moka Express, acrylic on canvas, 60x60cm



Chateau Margaux, acrylic on canvas, 50x40cm

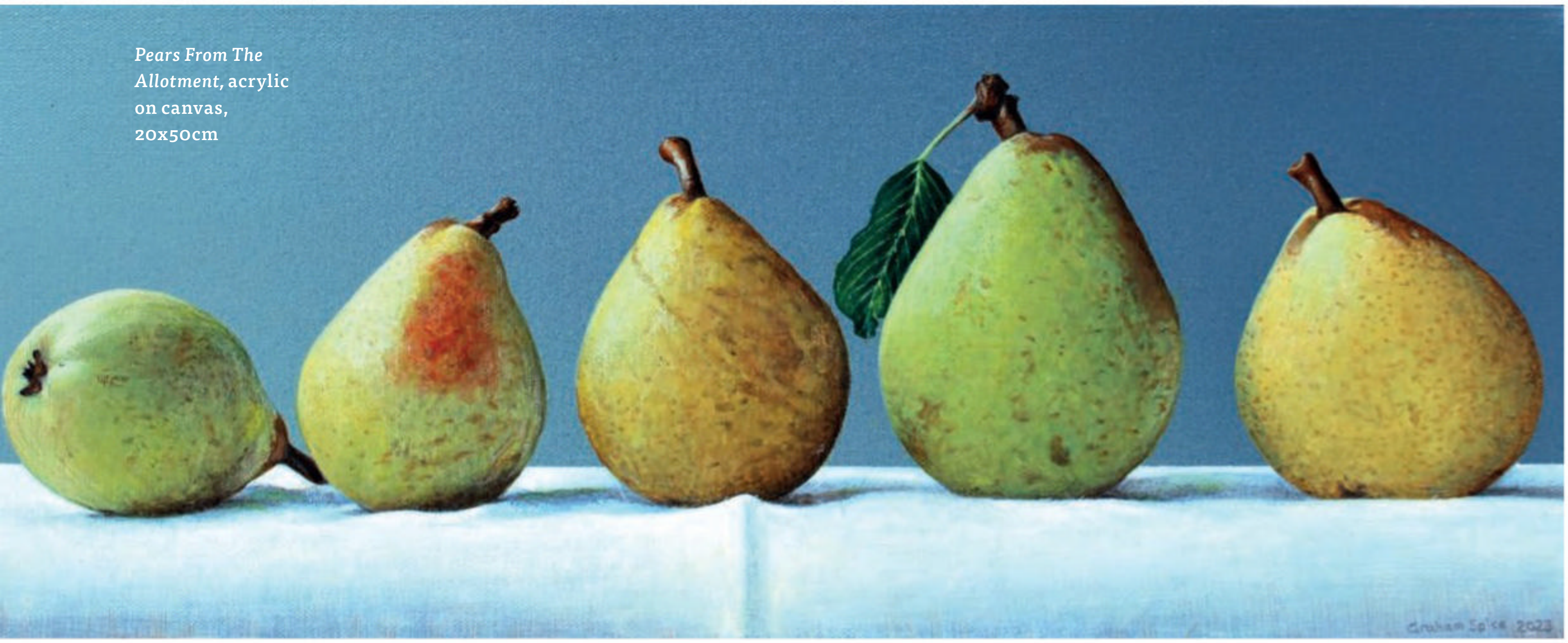
that have reflections, even old rusty things, the way the light glints on their surfaces, emphasising the dents and peeling labels. A recurring subject of mine is a collection of old blue soda syphons which I've obtained over time. I never get bored painting them. I begin by putting down an overall base colour onto the canvas and then draw in the basic image. Working over this, I build up the general shapes and structure of the objects, and once this is done, I can get into the detail: the way the light falls on an object, and the reflections. I prefer to paint with acrylic on canvas. It dries quicker than oil and allows me to work over and over on the same area of the painting without the colours getting muddy. I find it more controllable and there's no smell!

Nostalgia is a strong emotion.
I choose subjects which may have memories for me or I think will have memories for the viewer. Linking back to my time as a designer, I like iconic products and brands, their logos, and the different typefaces, these all form a part of people's everyday lives and the memories they can relate to. Ralph Goings, an American artist from the 60s and 70s, has been a real inspiration for me.

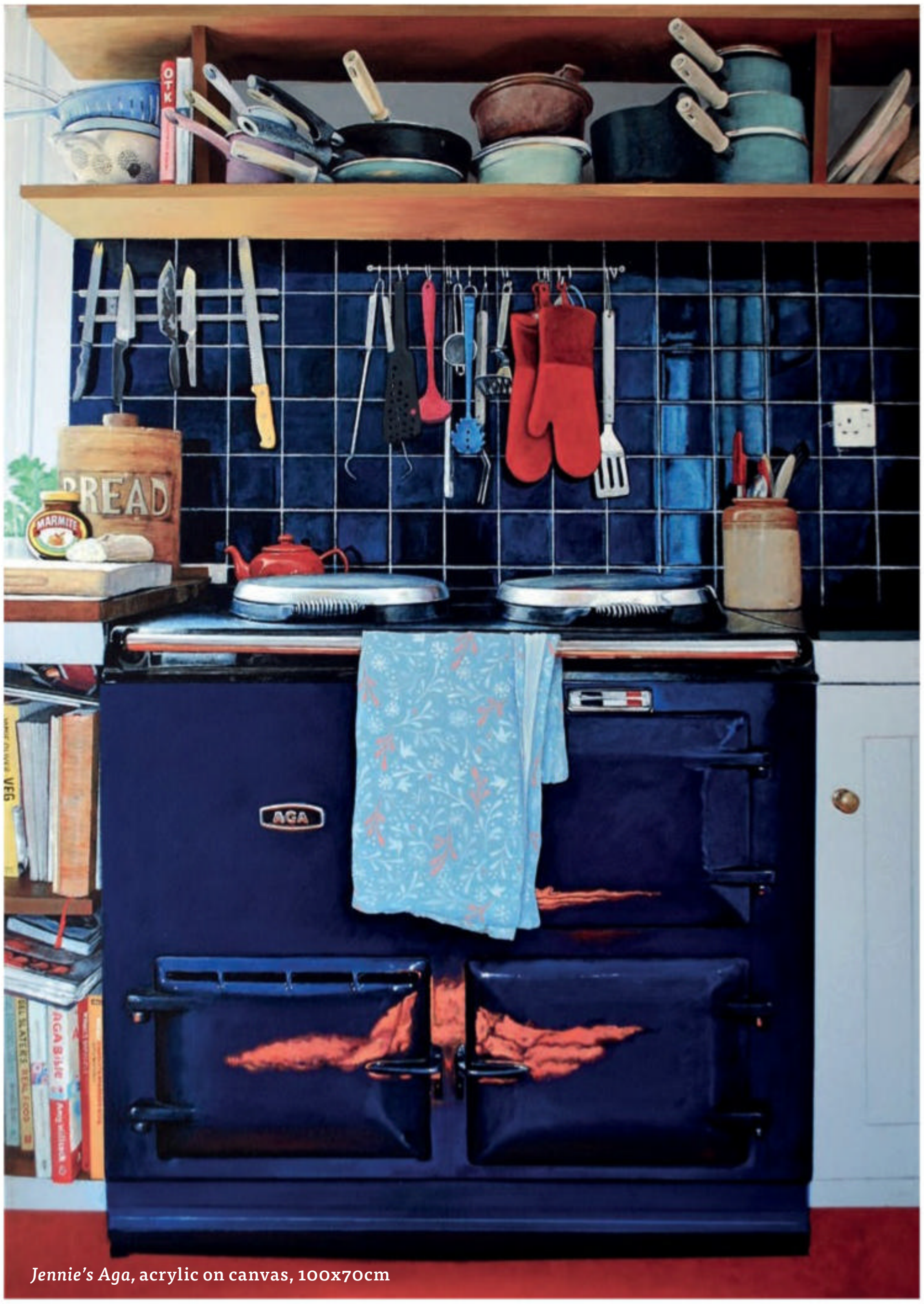
I always loved the directness of lino printing.
Cutting into a block of lino and printing from the remaining surface. It's so basic but, like everything I do, it ends up being a much more complex process of producing highly detailed, multi-coloured images. I use the reduction method of printing, which is also called the 'suicide' method: if you make a mistake at any time, it's a total disaster! Each print is cut from a single block of lino, printing the lightest colour first, then cutting into the same block to produce the second colour and so on until the final result is achieved. This means that a cut can never be reprinted.

I get most of my commissions from individuals.
They are often from people who want a painting of an object that has a special meaning to them. I had a commission from a client in London who wanted a painting of a Tabasco sauce bottle two metres tall, while someone else wanted a painting of a much-loved old Aga.

I'm not a perfectionist but I like to think my work has some individual style.
It's not just wanting to make something look photorealistic, it's about wanting to ▶



Pears From The Allotment, acrylic on canvas, 20x50cm



Jennie's Aga, acrylic on canvas, 100x70cm

I love to portray the dents and scratches that life has left in it's wake

reflect the life that the subject has had and showing it. I do abandon some paintings if I feel they're not working or not good enough. Some of my paintings may have more than one image hidden, as I tend to paint over the abandoned ones.

My studio is a small room in my house. I've been known to have to do a painting sideways when it was too tall to fit in the room. I also have an outbuilding in my courtyard where I do my printing. I use linseed oil-based inks and they have quite a strong smell, so it's better not to have them in the house. About 15 years ago, I relocated out of London to Suffolk, where I live with my wife Hilary, who puts up with me painting all of the time, as well as me taking over the other parts of the house when my studio is not big enough or I need to set up a still life in a different place where the lighting is better.

I wear out a lot of small brushes. A painting can take up to six weeks to complete depending on size and complexity. I paint nearly every day and the mornings are best. It's my full-time occupation since retiring from being a designer and I have to keep busy. I don't know how I would cope if I couldn't paint anymore. ◻

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When it comes to creating limited edition fine art prints, choosing the right materials is essential to maintaining the quality and longevity of your work. Award-winning artist Petra Börner knows this all too well. "For my limited-edition prints, I rely on the expertise of Art4site, a Hahnemühle Platinum-certified studio, to ensure accurate translations of my artwork and lasting colour," says Petra. Her choice of Hahnemühle William Turner paper complements her creative vision with its warm texture and beautiful finish, ensuring each print feels as special as the original.

Petra's prints are expertly crafted in collaboration with Art4site, a Hahnemühle Platinum-certified studio known for its meticulous approach to fine art printing. Specialising in high-quality reproductions, Art4site ensures that every piece retains its original vibrancy and detail. Petra's collaboration with Art4site spans over a decade. "Working with a professional fine art printer like Art4site guarantees consistent quality across all my editions."

This trusted partnership ensures that every aspect of her work, from technical detail to print handling, meets the highest standards. For Petra and several other artists, printmaking is an important revenue stream, with her prints available exclusively on her website.

Hahnemühle Platinum certified studios like Art4site meet strict criteria for excellence, using only top-tier materials and processes. This certification ensures that every print is of archival quality, making it the choice for artists who prioritise both aesthetics and longevity. Each certified studio undergoes rigorous evaluation, providing artists with peace of mind that their work will stand the test of time.

For artists and collectors alike, the Hahnemühle App offers invaluable resources, from finding certified studios to accessing useful tips on fine art printing. Whether you're managing your own prints or searching for new artwork, the app simplifies the process. You can also register your prints for free through *myartregistry.com*, adding another layer of authenticity and protection.

Hahnemühle's Certificate of Authenticity further protects your art, reducing the risk of forgery. Available online, it includes watermarked sheets and tamper-proof holograms; crucial for protecting limited editions. ***art4site.co.uk, hahnemuehle.co.uk*** □

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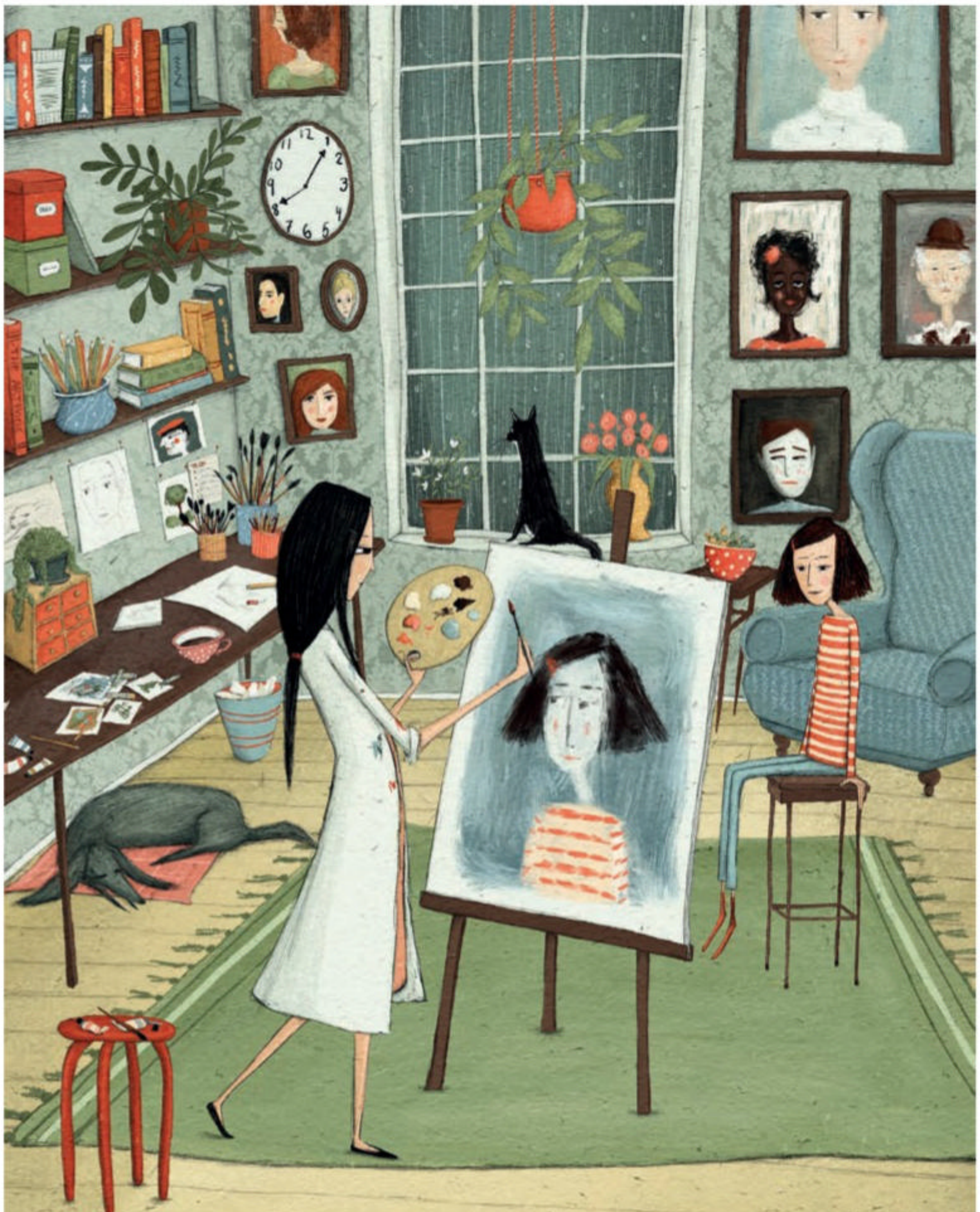
Maja Lindberg

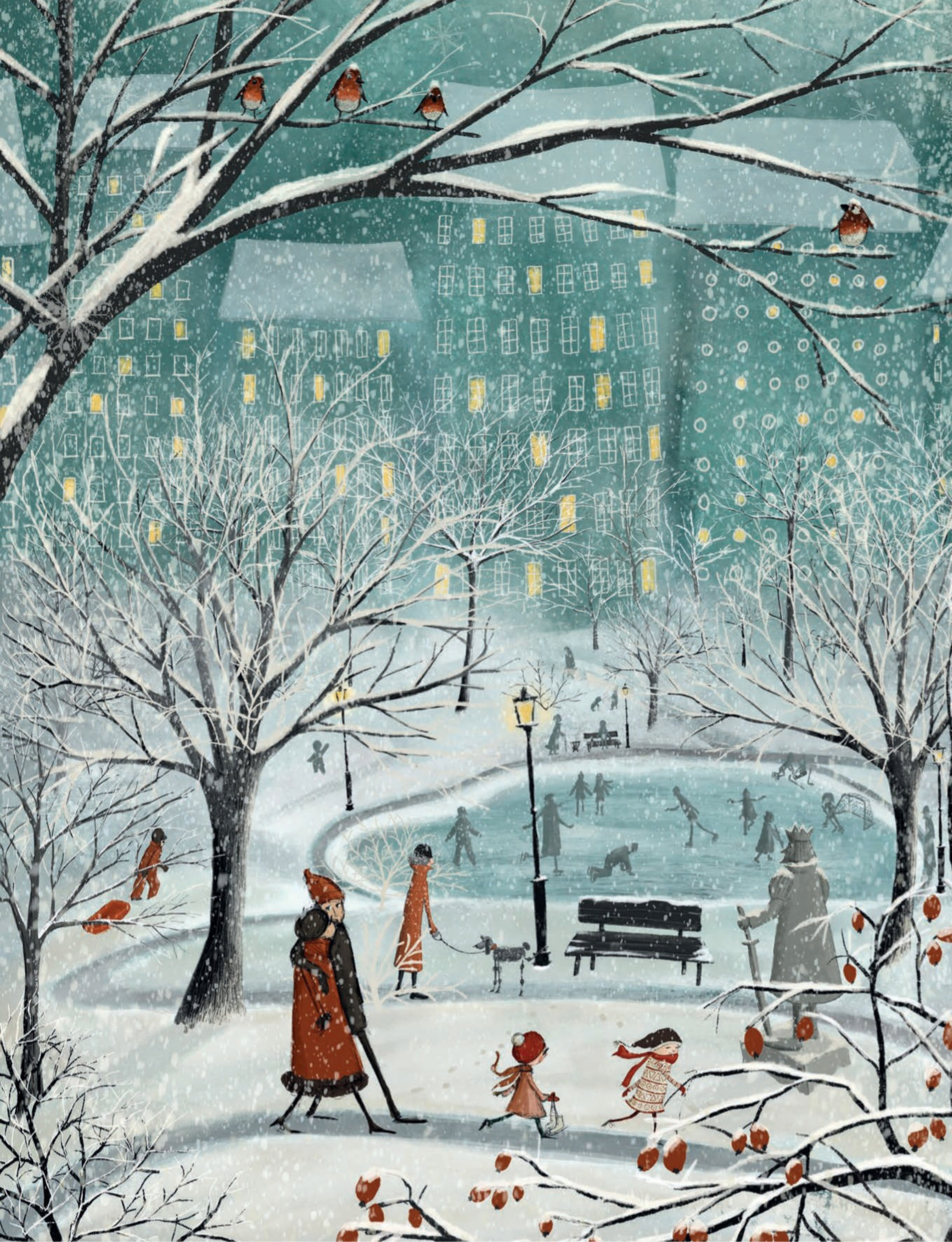


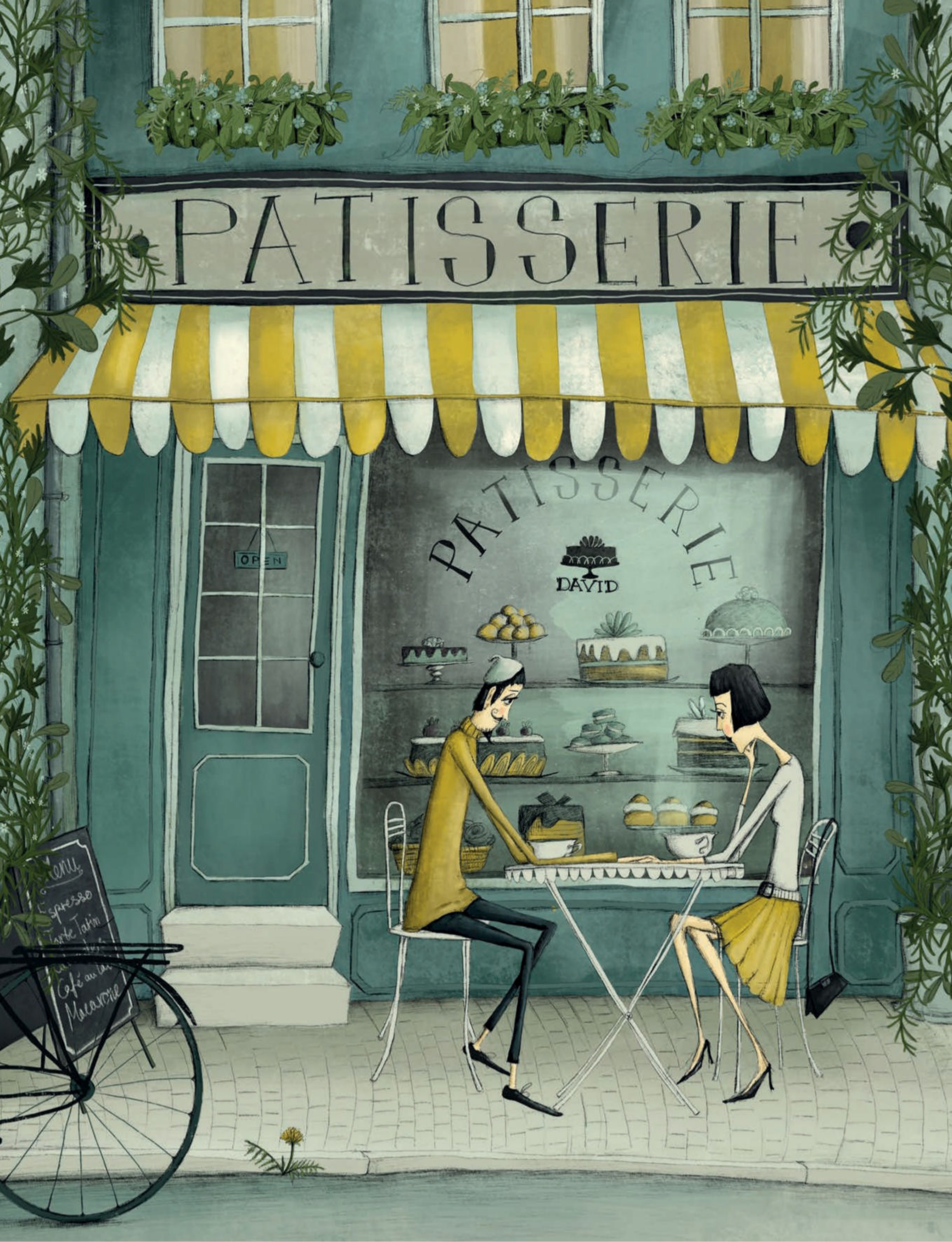
This artist's illustrations are inspired by fairy tales, dreams, childhood memories and her Swedish heritage. *Niki Browes* learns more

Growing up, all the kids wanted to hang out at Maja Lindberg's house. Before introducing craft activities to her pupils, her mum, a preschool teacher, would often test them out on her daughter and her friends. So, after their school day, they'd be found at the kitchen table, sleeves rolled up, moulding papier mâché heads, making animals out of clay or painting and drawing. To this day, her two best childhood friends still reminisce about the fun they had at her home. Those early years of creativity were formative; they all ended up working in creative industries.

Today, Maja is an in-demand illustrator, with clients all over the world. Not that this was the original intention. She trained as a ceramicist and then got an education in IT before starting an art blog, a move that changed the course of her career for good. ***majali.se*** ▸

LEFT *The Portrait Painter*, Procreate, 41.9x53.3cm
RIGHT *Snow In The Park*, Procreate, 29.7x42cm

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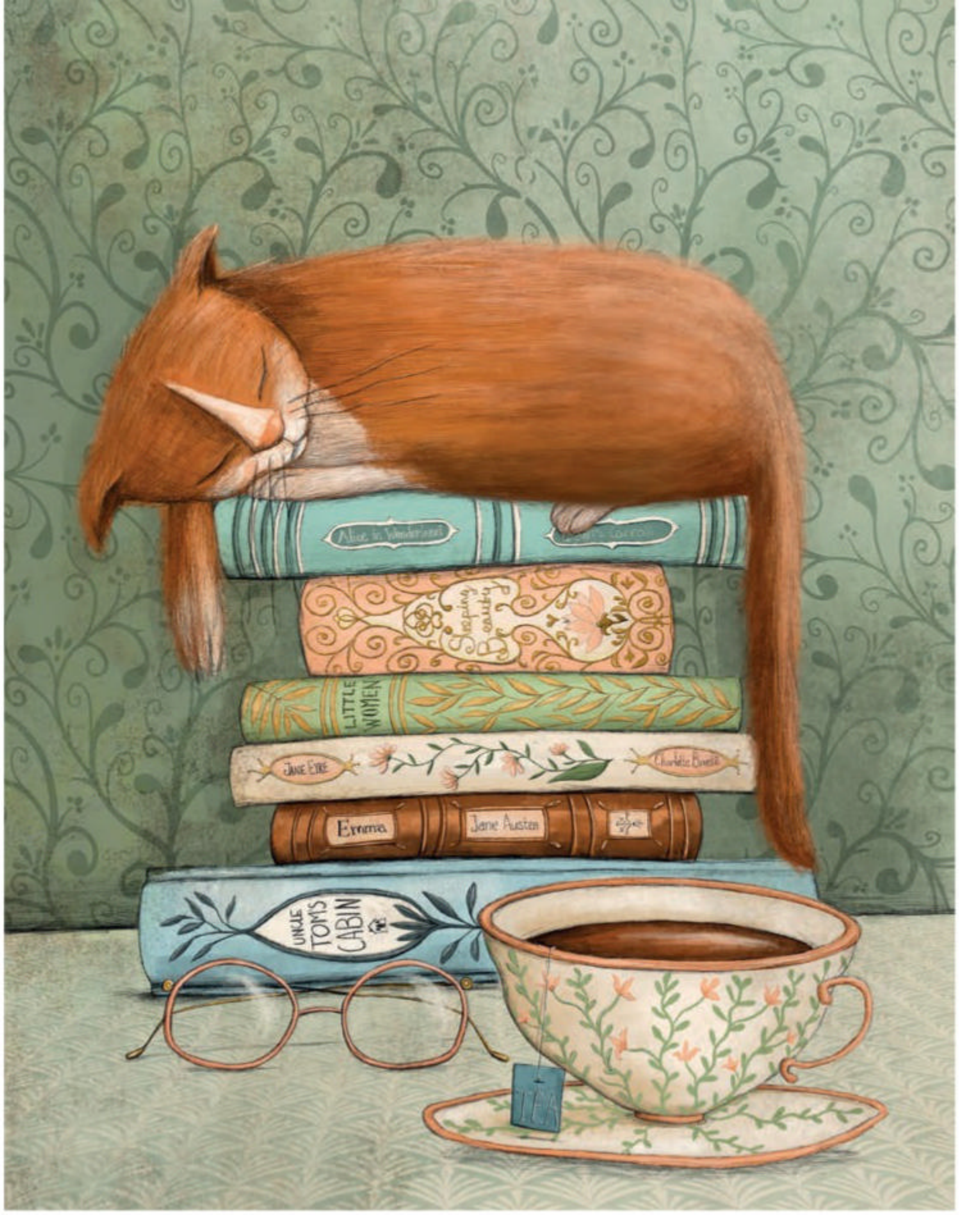
When I started the blog, I published one drawing a day.
Initially, I wasn't very good but, by practising and trying out lots of different styles, I got better and better. At first, I'd do most of the drawings in Illustrator, but after a while, I experimented with pen and paper, scanning the drawings and then continuing to work in Photoshop. My dream to become an illustrator grew with every passing day. Every night, when I went to bed, I'd repeat a mantra to myself: you are a brilliant illustrator.

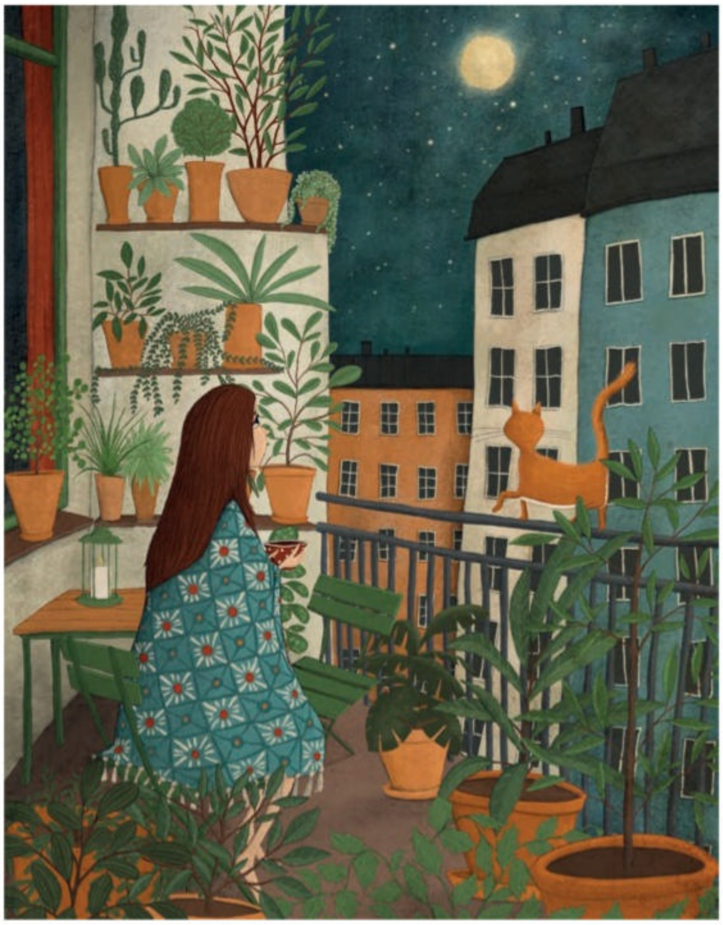
Before long, I bought an Apple pencil and started to explore Procreate on my iPad.
I took several courses on using the software and it took me a while to find my style; and to learn which brushes and textures I liked. After about a year, I felt like I knew what I was doing. These days, depending on the details, a piece can take about a week to come together, sometimes several. And then there are the times when everything flows, I have nothing else on in my schedule and I can finish it in a day. I also dabble in other mediums. One year, I took part in the '100 Days' project on Instagram and painted an animal a day in watercolour. These later got digitised and turned into Christmas cards.

I've got several different income streams, which I'd recommend to any artists wanting to make a living from their work.
In 2010, I started my Etsy shop where I sell prints and postcards, and have worked on some really fun commissions; including illustrating Bjorn Ulvaeus's children's book, *The White Piano*. I couldn't believe it when I got the call from his daughter asking if I'd do it. Seeing the book translated into five different languages and on display at the Abba Museum was a fantastic feeling. I also sell my products locally, from my studio, in galleries and at markets. Right now, my biggest client is Stringberry, who sells mobile phone cases featuring my designs.

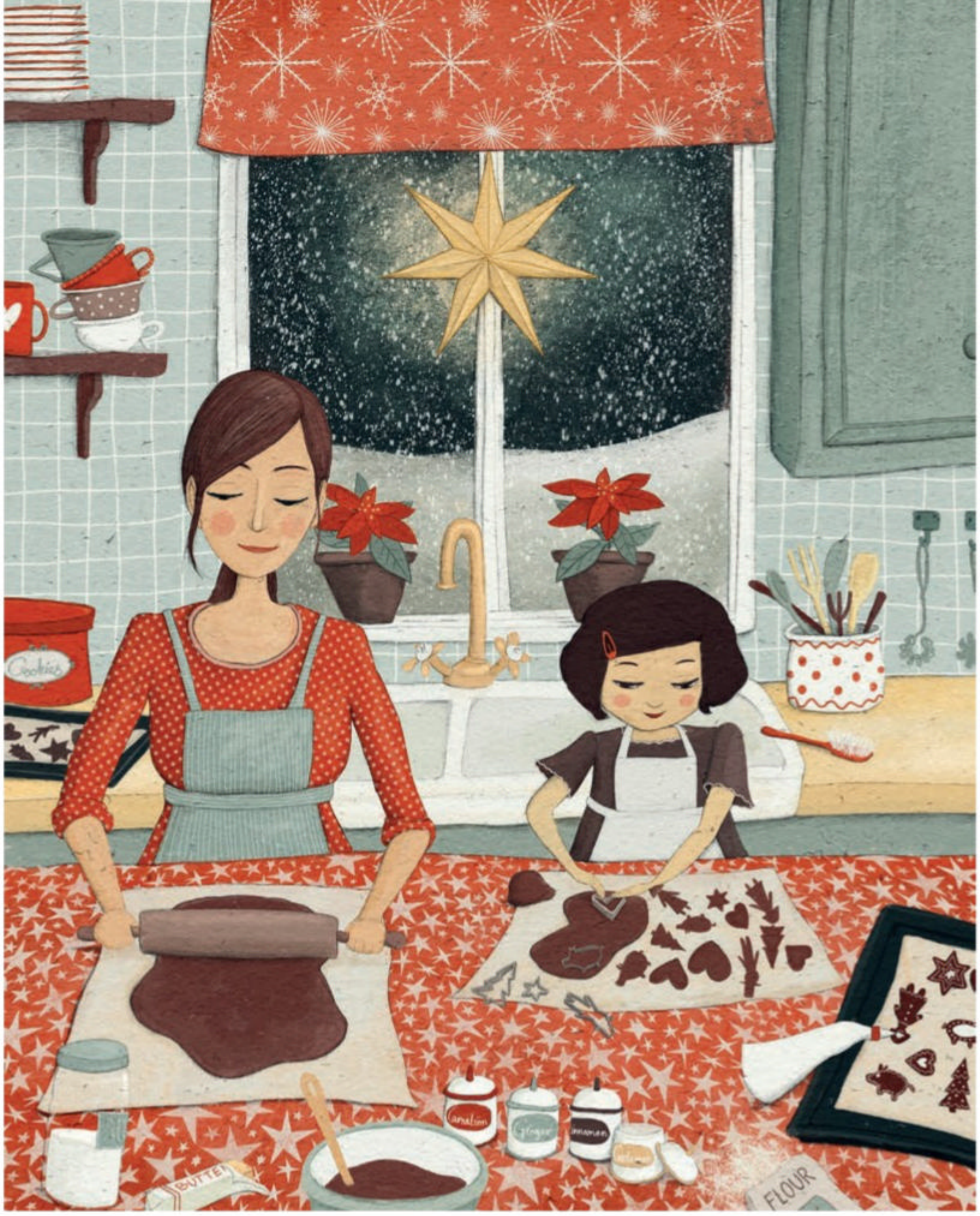
I've also worked on a Swedish children's TV show, magazines, puzzles and calendars.
It's invigorating that my job is so varied and that I don't sit there all day doing the same thing. I also love seeing my illustrations come alive in a different medium. It's like sending the illustrations out for an adventure, and then I become a proud mother.

I have an agent which has been a real step-up in my career.
She is very focused on the fact that we, as artists, should do commissions that we find joyful and exciting. She encourages us to ▸





OPPOSITE *Patisserie*, Procreate, 29.7x42cm
ABOVE *Cat and Books*, Procreate, 29.7x42cm
LEFT *Thinking of You*, Procreate, 29.7x42cm



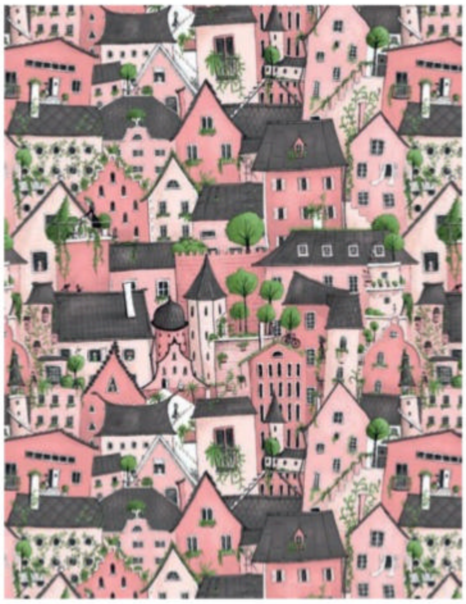
work on personal projects and comes up with ideas on how to develop as artists. Every year, she invites us to Brighton where she is based. For a couple of days, we meet up, talk, exchange ideas and get to know each other. This is precious time, and I return home filled with inspiration.

I don't like it when my pictures are too clean.
My illustrations are mostly inspired by fairy tales, dreams and childhood memories that often hold some mystery. The goal is to create beautiful and visually engaging images that encourage creativity, curiosity and fantasy. My Swedish heritage is probably also very clear in some of my work. Right now, I'm very much into Kurbits – a fantastical gourd plant commonly used in Swedish folk paintings as a symbol of good luck – and Dala horses, a traditional national wooden horse figurine.

In 2014, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and so, didn't take on any new commissions.
But on good days, I started to work on my first book, *Lilla Bokstavsboken (The Small Book of Letters)*, an ABC book with small rhymes and illustrations for each letter. In 2017, the book *Lilla Sifferboken (The Small Book of Numbers)* was released, which has the same setup as the previous book, but instead with numbers and months. I had a really good connection with the publisher and in the end, we made six books together.

I've also worked on four books with other authors.
I've been very lucky with each project as each writer gave me a lot of freedom with my interpretations of their text. I really appreciated this as, sometimes, too many external instructions can limit your fantasy.

Last year, we rebuilt our garage and turned it into my studio, which I love.
This was after I had started out working in the basement and later rented a space in the nearby city to work with other creatives. My current studio is in a small village by the sea, called Lomma, in the south of Sweden. I start every morning with either a morning walk, yoga or strength training. I then take my iPad and walk over to the studio. If there are orders, I usually take care of them first. Then, it's onto admin work such as answering emails, listing products, taking care of my accounting or other things that need to be done that aren't the most fun part of being an entrepreneur. If I'm pleased with my morning tasks, I usually spend the afternoon drawing, which is by far the best part of my job.



TOP *Sugar and Spice*, Procreate, 41.9x53.3cm **ABOVE** *Pink City*, Procreate, 25.4x25.4cm **OPPOSITE** *Under a Moonlit Sky*, Procreate, 41.9x53.3cm

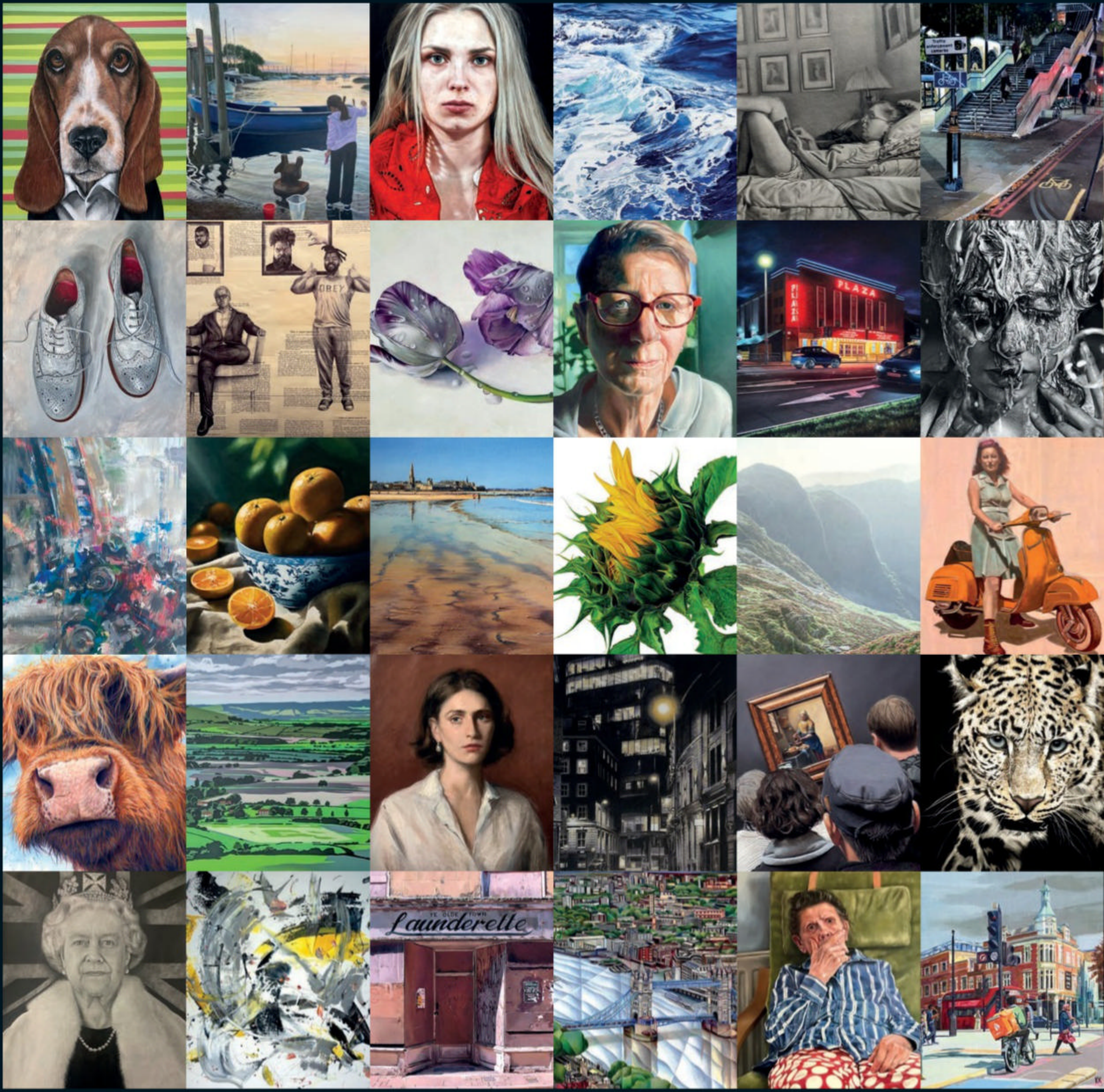
I have a love-hate relationship with social media.
I have a lot of followers and while that can give you a boost, at the same time, it's very hard not to compare yourself to other artists when you don't get as many likes for a post and the doubt starts creeping in. So, sometimes, I take a break, but I then notice a decline in my sales so the whole merry-go-round has to start again.

In Sweden, there are six very dark months from October to March.
But when Christmas arrives, all the windows and houses light up and you get that magical feeling. My Christmas illustrations are often filled with snow, hopefully, a special mood and then sometimes a hint of magic happening somewhere in the picture. I guess I love doing Christmas illustrations because there are so many happy aesthetics to choose from. I love the colours that go with the festivities and that the season is associated with good feelings for many people. I'm inspired by everything that makes me happy – and Christmas is one of those things. ◻

The
British
ART
prize
2024

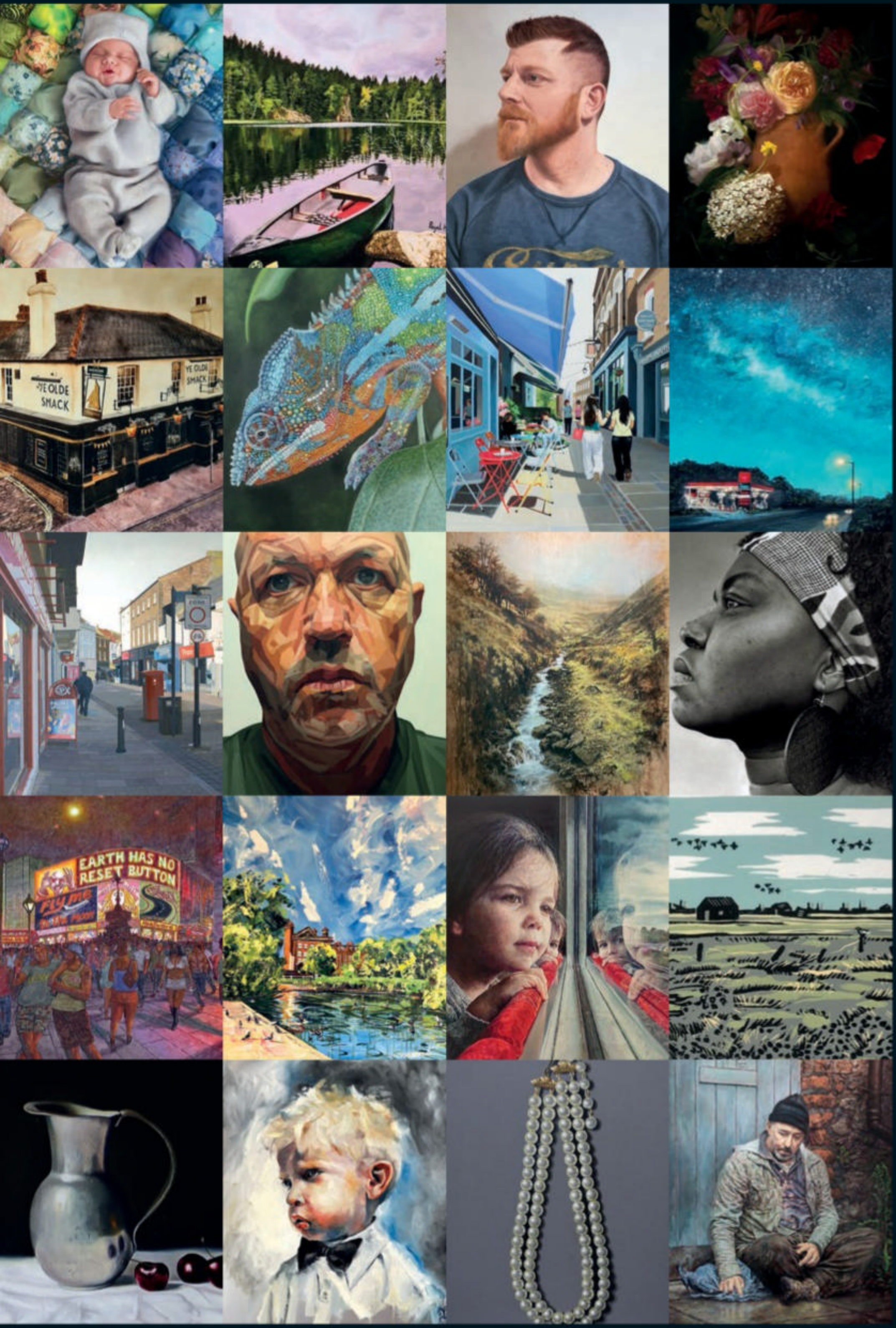
THE W

Our major annual global art competition was a huge success, and thousands of



INNERS

entries were whittled down to just 50 paintings. We present the winning artists – in their own words

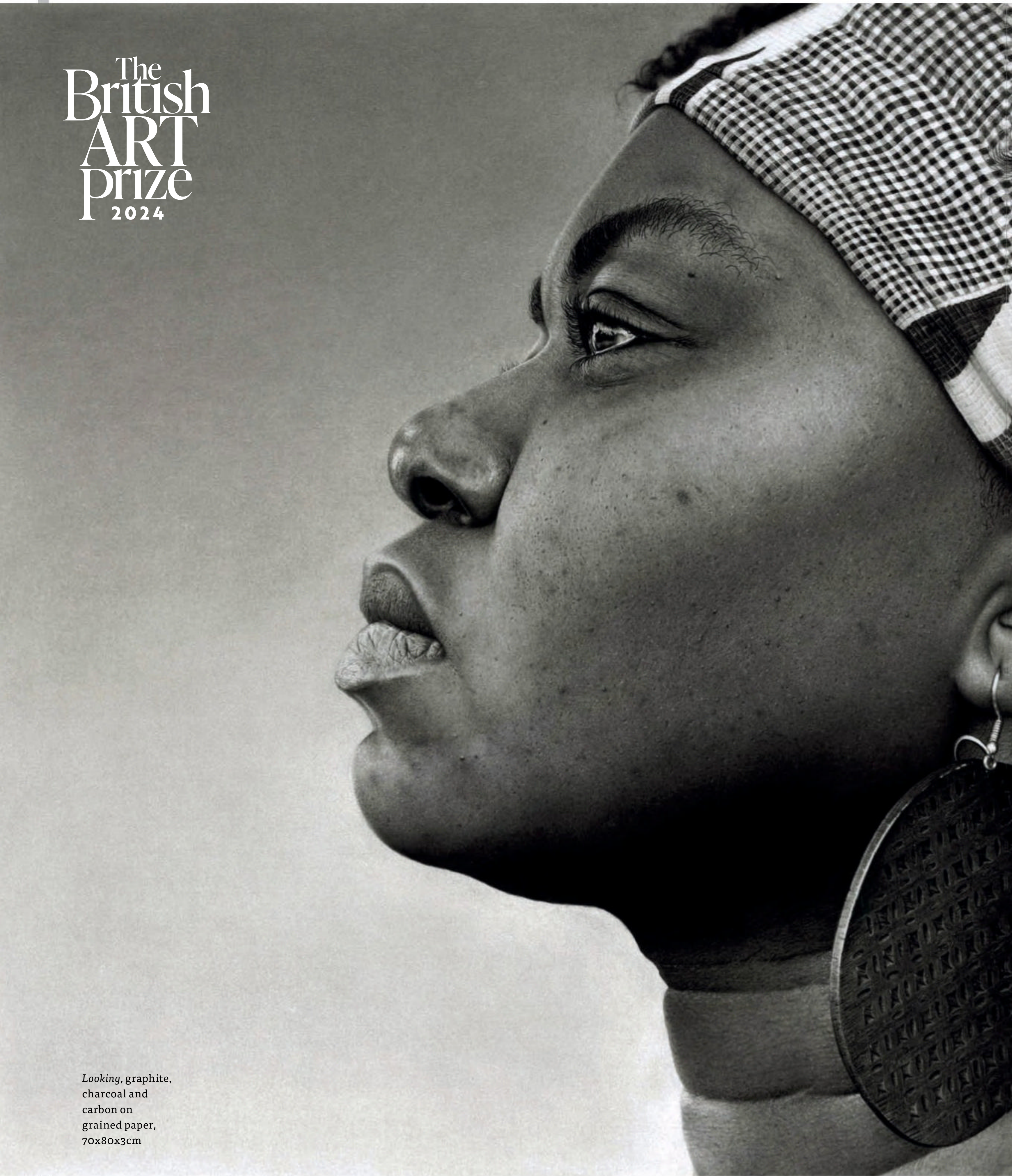

YE OLDE SMACK
EARTH HAS NO RESET BUTTON

The British Art Prize 2024, in association with Raw Umber and Caran d'Ache, attracted entries by the thousands and quality paintings and drawings poured in from the UK and beyond. An esteemed judging panel made up of Adebanji Alade, the Vice President of The Royal Institute of Oil Painters and Artist in Residence of The BBC's *The One Show*, Alvaro Castagnet, the world-renowned watercolour master, Dr Amy Orrock, national curator for the National Trust, lecturer at The Arts Society and art historian and Alastair Sooke, writer, broadcaster and *The Telegraph's* chief art critic had the almost impossible task of choosing the winning entries. As the prize has a broad selection process – with no theme or medium constraints – the resulting shortlist is a fabulous smorgasbord of styles and subject matter.

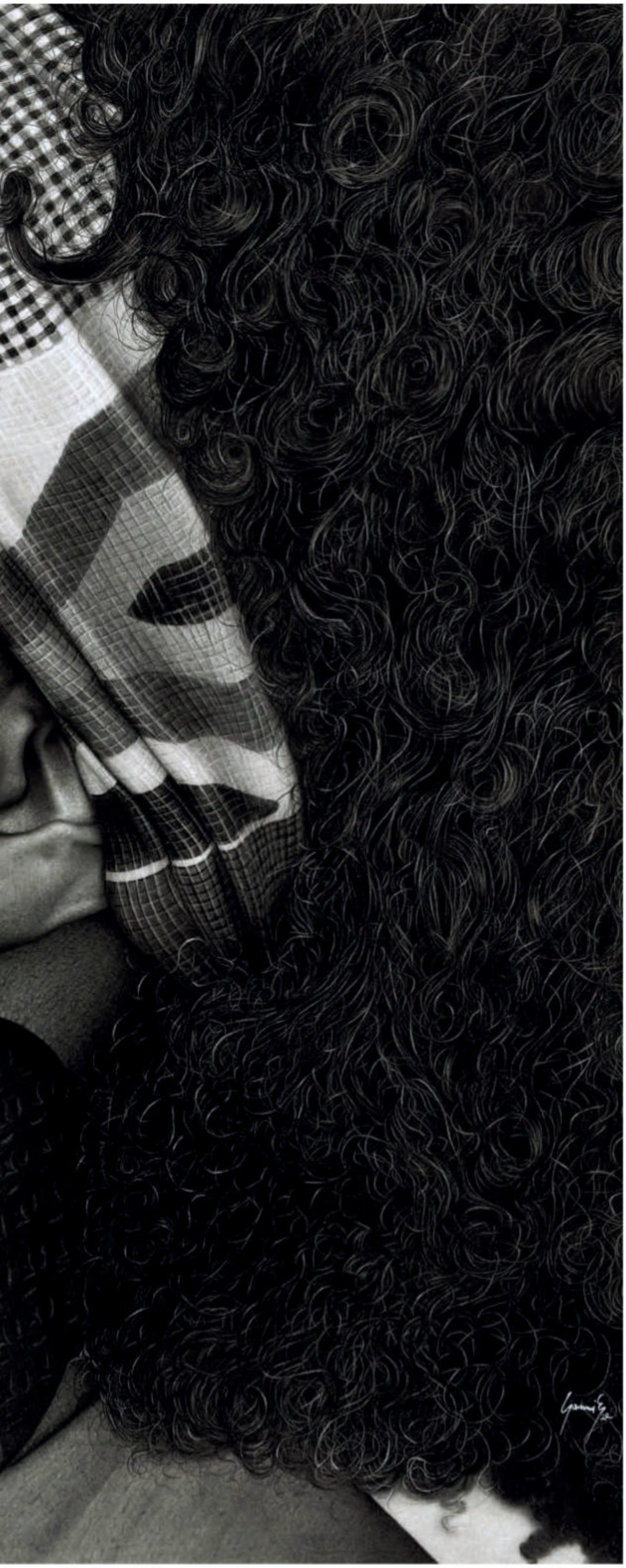
All 50 artists will have their work displayed at London South Bank's gallery@oxo in December, whilst the top four we introduce you to here can enjoy the spoils of the prize fund totalling over £10,000, including cash prizes and premium art materials, plus valuable coverage in *Artists & Illustrators*. Over to them. ▸

You'll be able to see the art up close at the gallery@oxo, London from 4 to 8 December 2024 but for now, let us introduce you to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize winners as well as the winner of the Portraiture Prize. Congratulations to everyone who got through!

The British ART prize 2024



Looking, graphite, charcoal and carbon on grained paper, 70x80x3cm



FIRST PRIZE

Samuel Owusu Achiaw

Growing up in Ghana, I spent a good chunk of my childhood drawing Disney and comic book characters. As I got older, I got increasingly busy with senior high school and the early years of medical school; so drawing became less of a priority.

Towards the end of my third year, in medical school, I bumped into a friend from senior high school who had taken up portraiture as a hobby. He knew I used to draw in the past and motivated me to pick up my pencil again. Finding my way back to art, specifically drawing, was a very enriching experience and I realised drawing did not have to be out of my life just because I did not plan to pursue it professionally.

After completing medical school, I worked as a doctor in Ghana for three years before moving to Scotland to pursue a master's degree. Currently, I work as a researcher in Health Economics and Health Technology Assessment at the University of Glasgow. It has not always been easy combining art with my other professional pursuits, but I suppose we all learn to make time for things that are important to us, and for me, this is art. I have come to acknowledge that progress may be slow sometimes, but the key is it keeps moving, even if it is only by an inch sometimes and in practice, this may mean only having an hour or two some weeks to work on my art projects.

Realism started as a challenge when I ventured into portraiture. I have always been fascinated by how all the small simple inconspicuous bits – a line, a dot, a smudge – come together to create something intricate and interesting. I guess I find value and beauty in detail.

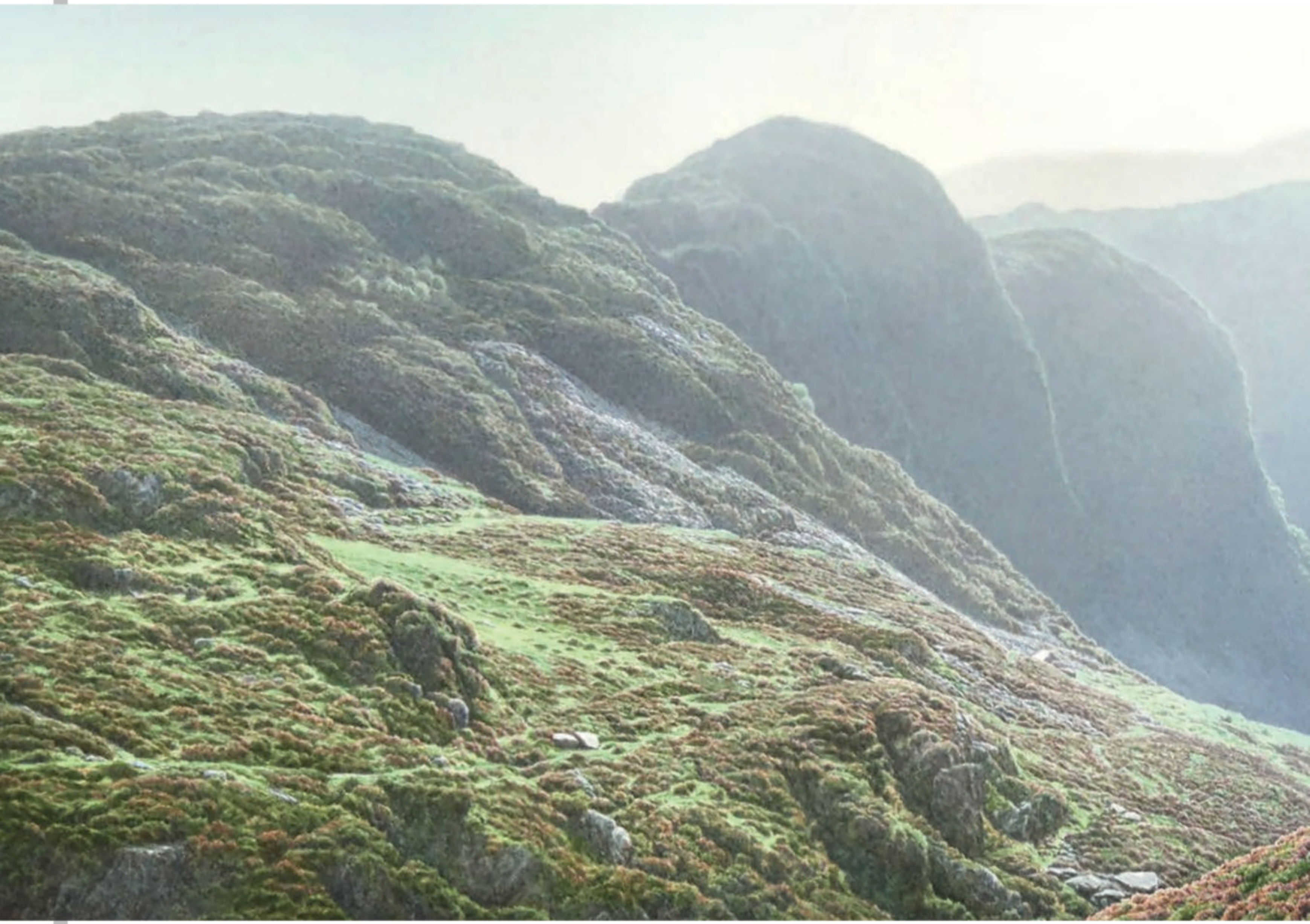
I am inspired by artists such as Kelvin Okafor and the Dutch artist Tjalf Sparnaay. My current series of artworks are inspired by Ghanaian culture and history. The works explore the interaction between Akan culture (where I'm from) and Western influences, and how that has impacted the perception of Akan art and culture in contemporary times. But I always come back to portraiture.

Looking is a graphite portrait of my sister. She has been one, among many, who has always encouraged me to keep drawing. I remember visiting her when she was preparing for an important law school exam, and I captured her with this deep, pensive gaze. The portrait is an homage to her unwavering support throughout my artistic voyage.

Entering competitions such as The British Art Prize is a great way to meet a diverse range of artists and other professionals in the art world, to share ideas with. I am immensely grateful to the judges for selecting me for this prize; it simply doesn't feel real. I am also grateful to everyone, like my sister, close friends and social media followers, who have encouraged me on this journey. It's one I intend to expand on and, if I should ever be granted the wish of having more than 24 hours in one day, I will look to learn more and more.

samuelachiaw.com ▸

Green Crag and Haystacks from the southern flank of Fleetwith Pike, watercolour, 42x95.5x3cm

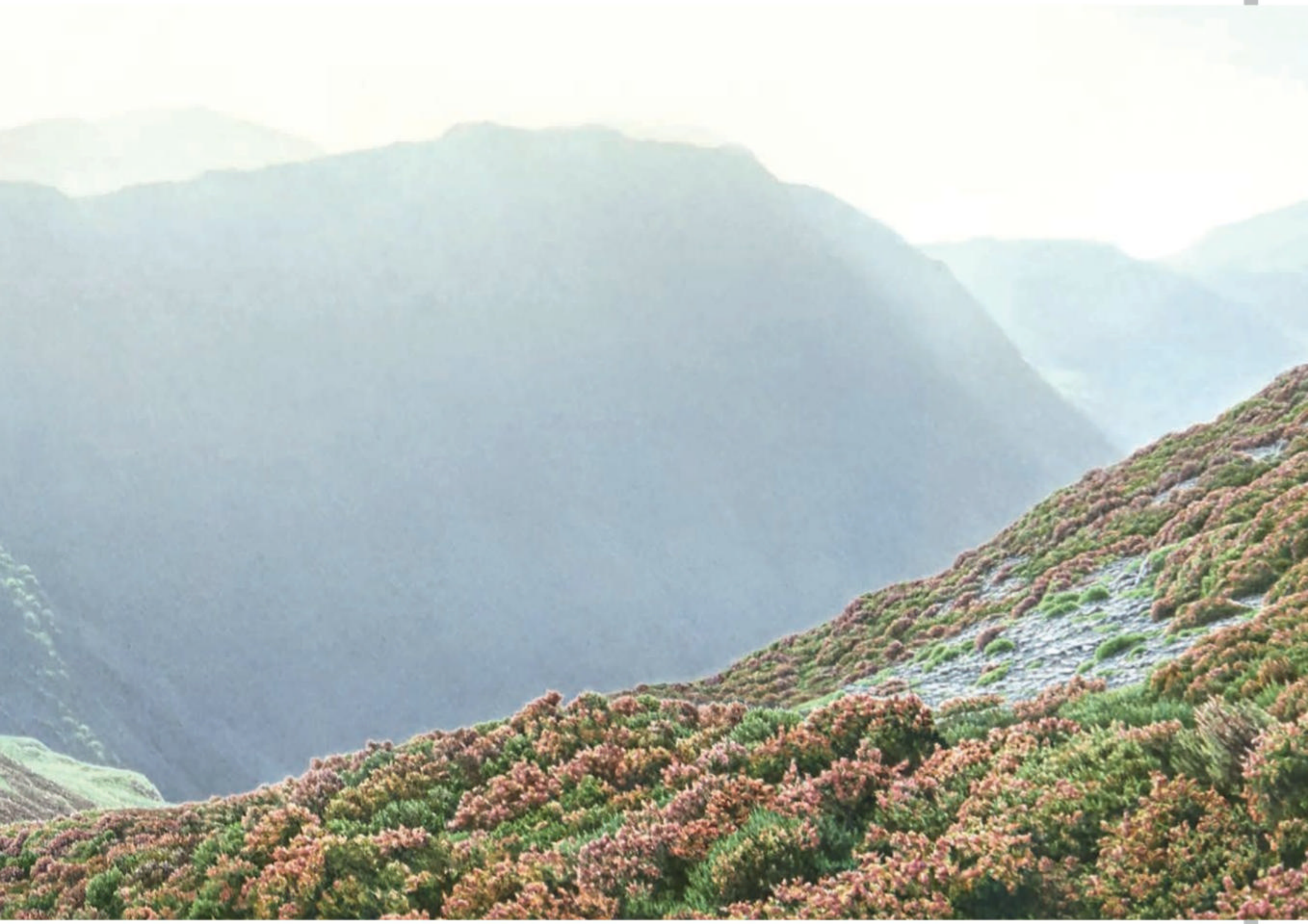


SECOND PRIZE

Lawrence Green

I TOOK THE REFERENCE PHOTOS for this painting in the summer of 1998, on the way back down to the Buttermere Valley after a day in the mountains. The weather was good but I didn't notice anything unusual until the path turned, so that I was facing into the sun and looking into the shaded side of the mountains. I know that it's a bit of a cliché, but I was transfixed, in awe of the sublime magnificence of it all.

It took me about six months to complete *Green Crag and Haystacks From the Southern Flank of Fleetwith Pike* and during that time,



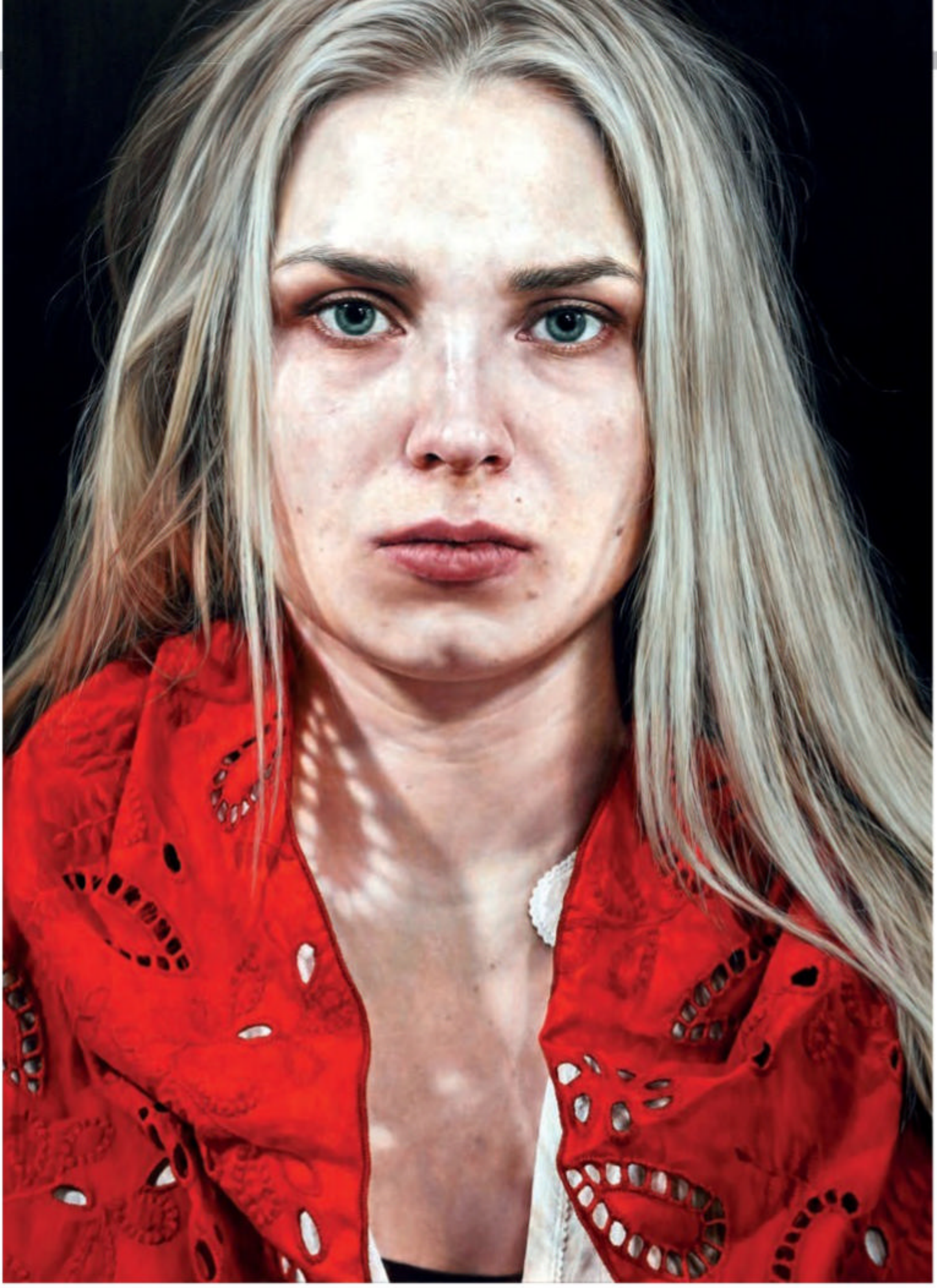
I didn't work on anything else. I couldn't begin to estimate the number of hours spent, but it was in the hundreds. You might expect that the highly detailed areas of the painting would take the most time but actually, it was the gradual variation in the flat shadows which took the longest. There, I used the pigment to gradually build up a stain in the paper, starting with broad washes and then using ever finer adjustments to give the right effect. The smallest brush used in that area was a 20 "0" modelling brush.

One of my earliest memories of making art is of drawing a house in perspective at infant school. Even then, the challenge of depicting a three-dimensional world on a flat piece of paper fascinated me. I was painting as a hobby until I left university but after that, my art output dwindled as my career took over. I retired in 2018 and started painting mountains in watercolour. It took me a while to find the right materials (most importantly, discovering paper made with 100% cotton) but, within a year, I had developed my own style and was producing exhibitable watercolour paintings. I'm not trying to make a living from art, so I'm not professional, but what energy I have is expended on my art, which is now key to my identity.

I spend a lot of time on each painting; as long as it takes to get the result that I'm looking for. That means that my output is very low but, still, I want each piece to be seen as widely as possible. The best way of doing that is to enter my work for exhibitions and competitions. Rejections outnumber acceptances, which is something you have to get used to, so I'm thrilled with this win. If I had to sum it up in one word it would be this: surreal.

rbsa.org.uk/members/lawrence-green ▸

The British ART prize 2024



The Vanished Summer, oil on Belgian linen, 140x100x3cm

THIRD PRIZE

Arina Gordienko

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED to be an artist, and as a child, I drew on every surface I could find. Now, as a painter, I transfer my feelings, thoughts and perceptions of this world into my works with paint and brushes.

The most inspiring part of painting a figure or portrait is capturing the essence of a human soul; emotions that are often hidden deep inside. It's intimate, which is why I often depict my characters with a direct gaze, creating a non-verbal communication with the viewer that feels personal and sincere. I hope viewers feel this emotional connection and experience the strong feelings I aim to share. For me, emotions are a universal language that can unite people, crossing any borders.

There is magic even in the process of painting a figure. I sketch extensively before choosing a subject. I start by staring at a blank page; after a while, something appears in my mind, and then I make the first line – and the magic begins. I love materialising the images in my imagination into figures on my canvas.

The inspiration for *The Vanished Summer* came from *Just Not Enough,* a poem by Arseny Tarkovsky, my favourite poet since I was 15. It is about something you have lost and will never be able to have back again; about something that you can never achieve. As a painter, I feel that some emotions and feelings are very hard or almost impossible to describe with words, and I believe that painters have a chance to express those emotions and feelings through their works. This is one such piece. For me painting is a silent, magical medium; it does not need any words. Its goal is to connect with viewers visually but not verbally as it does a book or a poem.

I prefer realism in painting because I believe this world is precious, and I want to show it with every detail I can capture. I value realistic traditions and follow the Renaissance Masters' *sfumato* technique, layering tones to bring a softened, subtle outcome. This classical technique, blended with a contemporary approach, takes me several months to complete one painting.

Artists often work alone, so open calls and submissions, like The British Art Prize, offer a chance to meet inspiring people, see new works, and reach a new audience. Publications and art magazines provide wider exposure. I believe challenges that push you out of your comfort zone, like submitting to art contests, are essential for growth. It is great to get recognition for my painting and I am very grateful to the judges. ***arina-gordienko.com*** ▸

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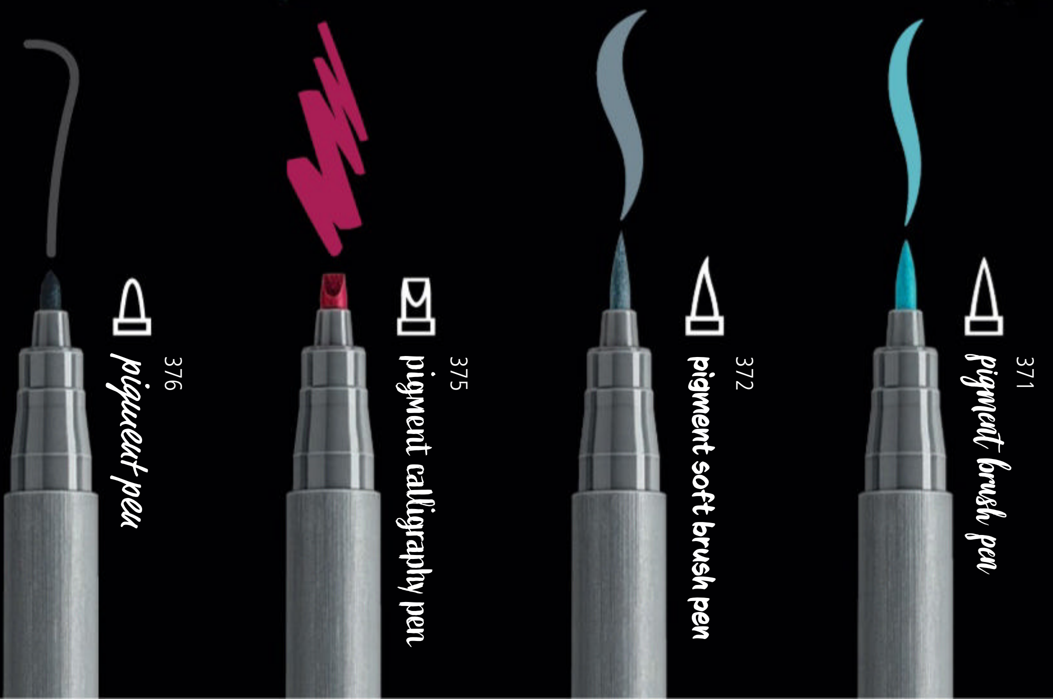
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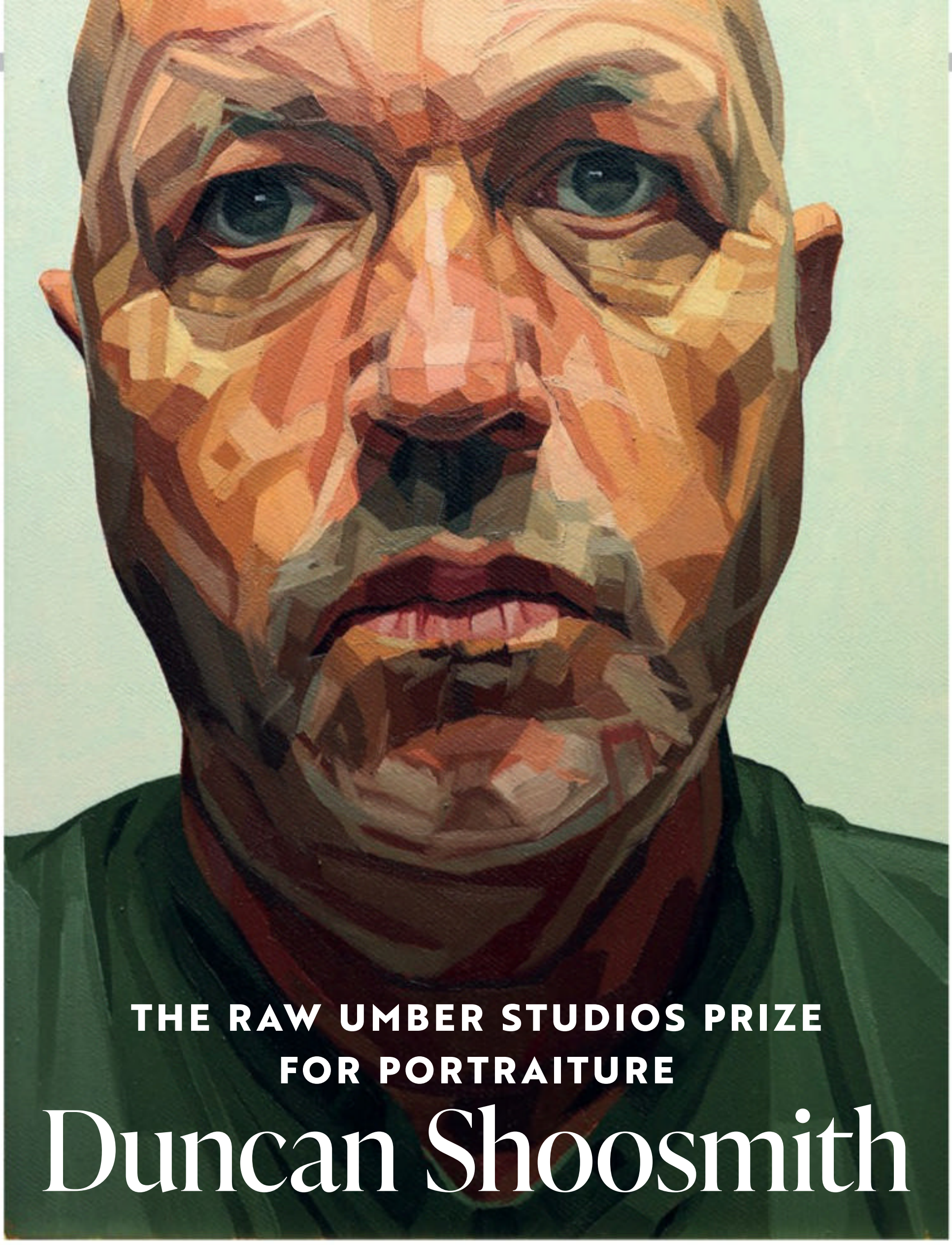

THE RAW UMBER STUDIOS PRIZE FOR PORTRAITURE

Duncan Shoosmith

Self Portrait in Green T-Shirt, oil on canvas, 40x30x2cm

Self Portrait in Green T-Shirt was created during a break between commissions. I find commissions mentally challenging – there's pressure to please the client and worries about flattery and justification. In response, I created something intentionally unflattering – an image only I know about, free from concerns about likeness or approval.

The angular shapes give my face a fragmented, yet cohesive, appearance. I consistently paint in this style, despite my face not being angular. The elevated eye line adds intrigue, creating a forlorn quality, with much of the figure in shadow.

In school, I learned to draw in a structured manner, focusing on form. Cézanne and Degas also shaped my approach. We learned to describe subjects in planes, a method I still use, hence my 'geometric' style.

I then pursued a degree in Graphic Design but soon got bored, which led me to painting. A turning point came when I attended Lucian Freud's 1993 exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery; it left a lasting impression. Five years later, I was selected for the BP Portrait Award, which opened doors to commissions, including a family portrait for a BBC interior design show. My schedule quickly filled with portrait work, not a deliberate choice but a response to demand.

Lucian Freud and Frank Auerbach have both influenced my style. While I focus on portraits of others, I often return to self-portraits or floral compositions for creative freedom.

My colour palette for the flesh varies based on the subject's ethnicity. For my Caucasian skin tone, I start with warm hues and balance them with cooler greys. The shapes I create are anatomical; the brushstroke direction defines the form. While tonal sense is essential, I find joy in the abstraction of shapes.

One challenge is managing subtle shifts in colour while maintaining clear brushstrokes. I've never blended paints, so delicate transitions require care. Dividing the skin into too many shapes risks losing the essence of the painting. The colours in this piece are striking. I wear the green t-shirt to incorporate that colour into the composition, balancing the warm flesh tones with a touch of green that mirrors my eyes.

Winning the Raw Umber Studios Prize For Portraiture is flattering, especially as it's from such a reputable institution. I hope viewers perceive beauty in the shapes and colours, along with balance in this self-portrait.

To aspiring artists, I say, 'Do it!' Keep creating without the need to justify your work. Use yourself and friends as subjects, painting without pressure or concern for who will see it. ***dshoosmith.co.uk*** ◻

The British ART prize 2024

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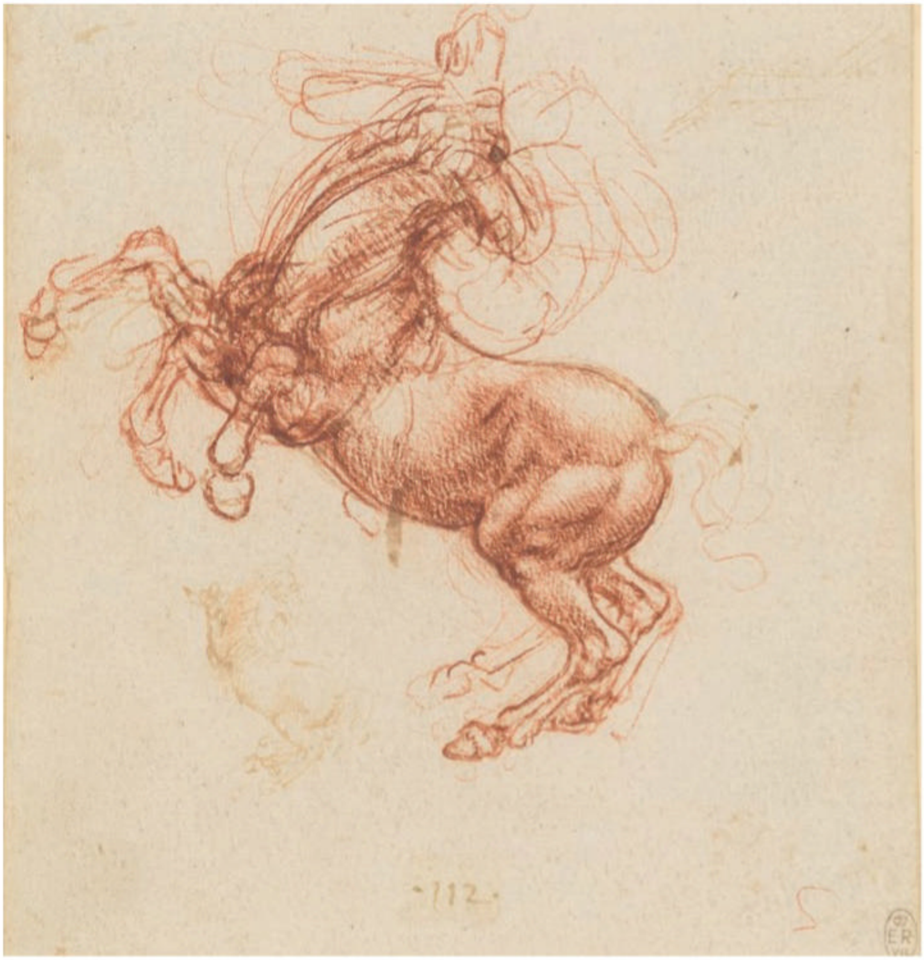
Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael 1504

A new exhibition at the Royal Academy explores the rivalry between Michelangelo and Leonardo, and the influence they both had on the young Raphael. *Amanda Hodges* finds out more



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PICTURE THE SCENE: the year is 1504 in Florence and young Michelangelo Buonarotti has been in the city for a couple of years working on an extraordinary commission. A huge block of marble has slowly been sculpted into the Biblical figure of David, a project just finished. Michelangelo, always happiest with chisel in hand, declared, “Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.”

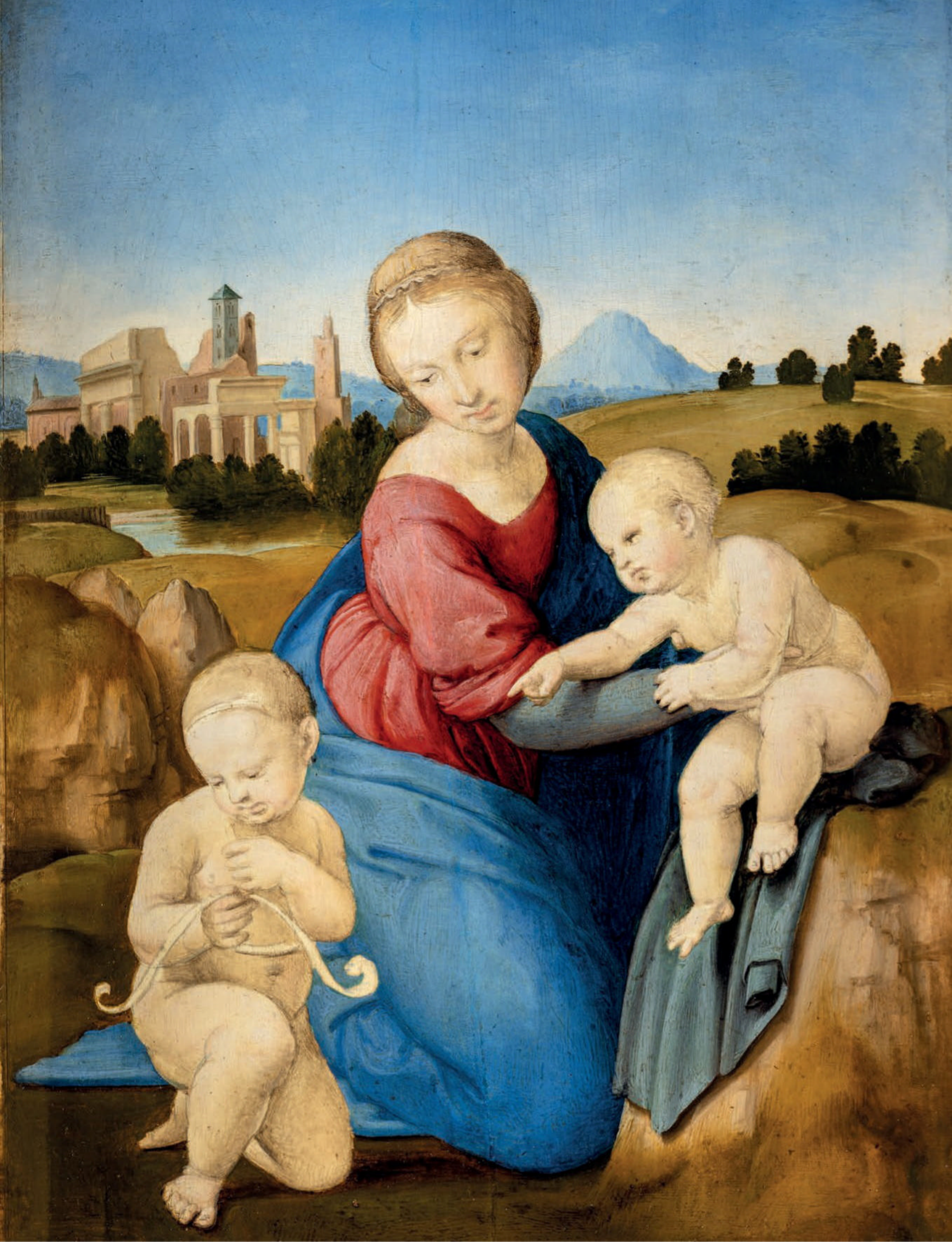
The gigantic figure, 17 feet high, was “very much seen as a metaphor for Florence, a small but grand Republic, fighting and winning,” according to Julien Domercq, curator of the Royal Academy’s new exhibition *Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael 1504*. “Big both in size and significance, a piece of propaganda,” the brilliance of *David* was realised immediately, and a commission of officials plus artists, painters and sculptors formed to choose the statue’s location.

A key committee member was celebrated artist and polymath Leonardo da Vinci, recently working on the Mona Lisa. Leonardo and others insisted, “It should go into the Loggia de Lanzi opposite Palazzo Vecchio, a covered space, protected from the weather,” says Domercq, “perfect, as it gives shelter, but less prominent than the one finally chosen on a raised platform, right in front of the Palazzo Vecchio.”

Whether Michelangelo felt patronised, or the ▶

LEFT *A Rearing Horse*, Leonardo da Vinci, 1503-05, red chalk on paper, 15.3x14.2 cm **OPPOSITE** *The Virgin and Child with the Infant St John the Baptist (‘The Esterhazy Madonna’)*, Raphael, 1508, tempera and oil on panel, 28.5x21.5cm

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BUDAPEST



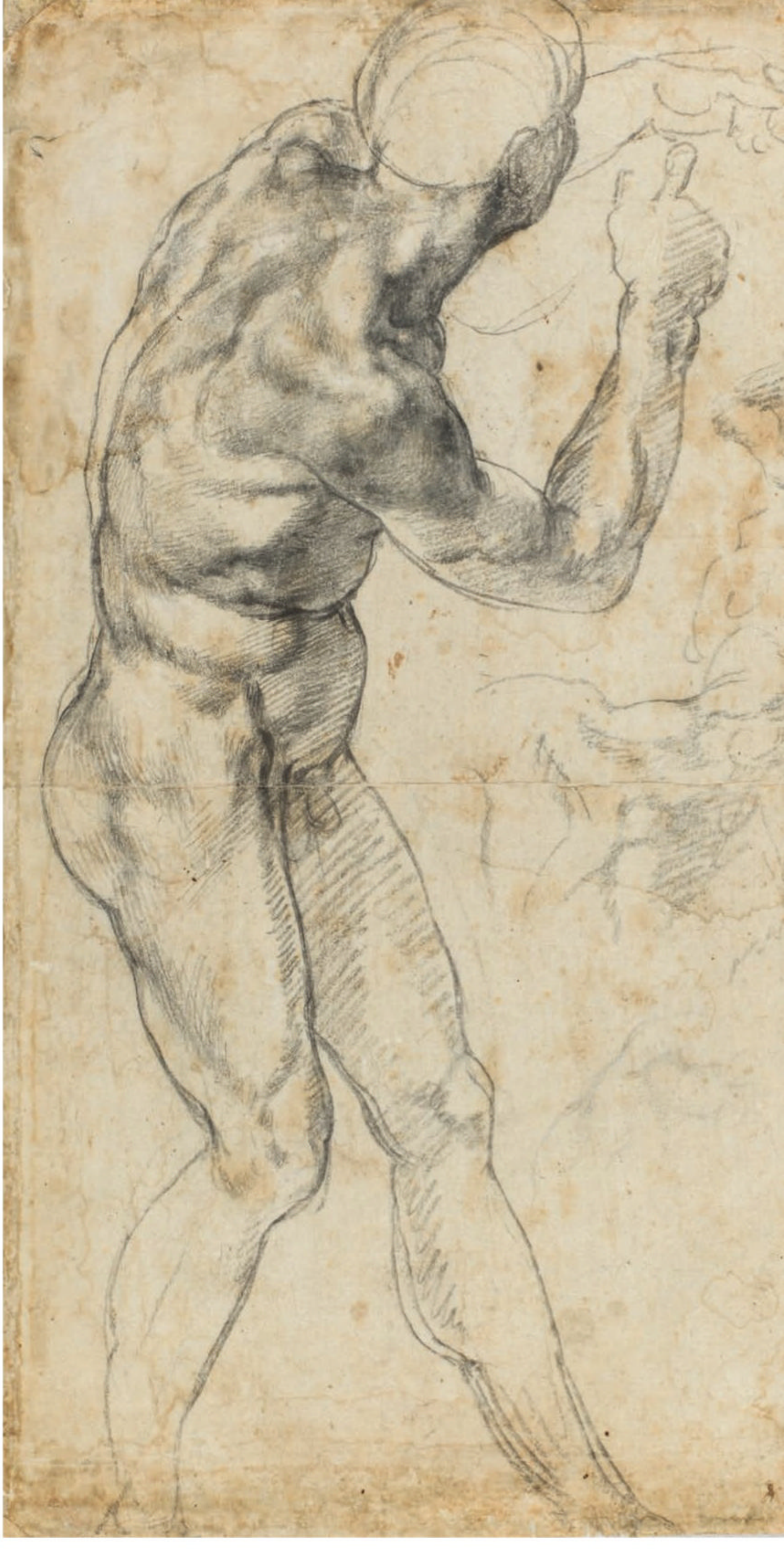
older Leonardo challenged by a prodigiously gifted newcomer is unclear, but it's obvious that what Domercq calls an embryonic "clash of the titans" was emerging, each man jostling for artistic supremacy. Contemporary evidence mentions 'strong resentment' as well as mutual artistic respect, Leonardo's advocacy for *David*'s position possibly signalling potential animosity, but "if you think about the personalities, particularly Michelangelo," as Domercq explains, "he has this sense of being this genius. Two great minds, two rivals in commissions, I think the tension was there before!"

Recently visiting Florence, Domercq discovered, "When mentioning the year 1504, everyone's eyes lit up! It's a moment of profound upheaval, a year when these three great artists were in the same place together. Being able to trace that incredibly clearly through art is not just theoretical, you see their proximity from the works. It's a mythical moment and one we bring back to life."

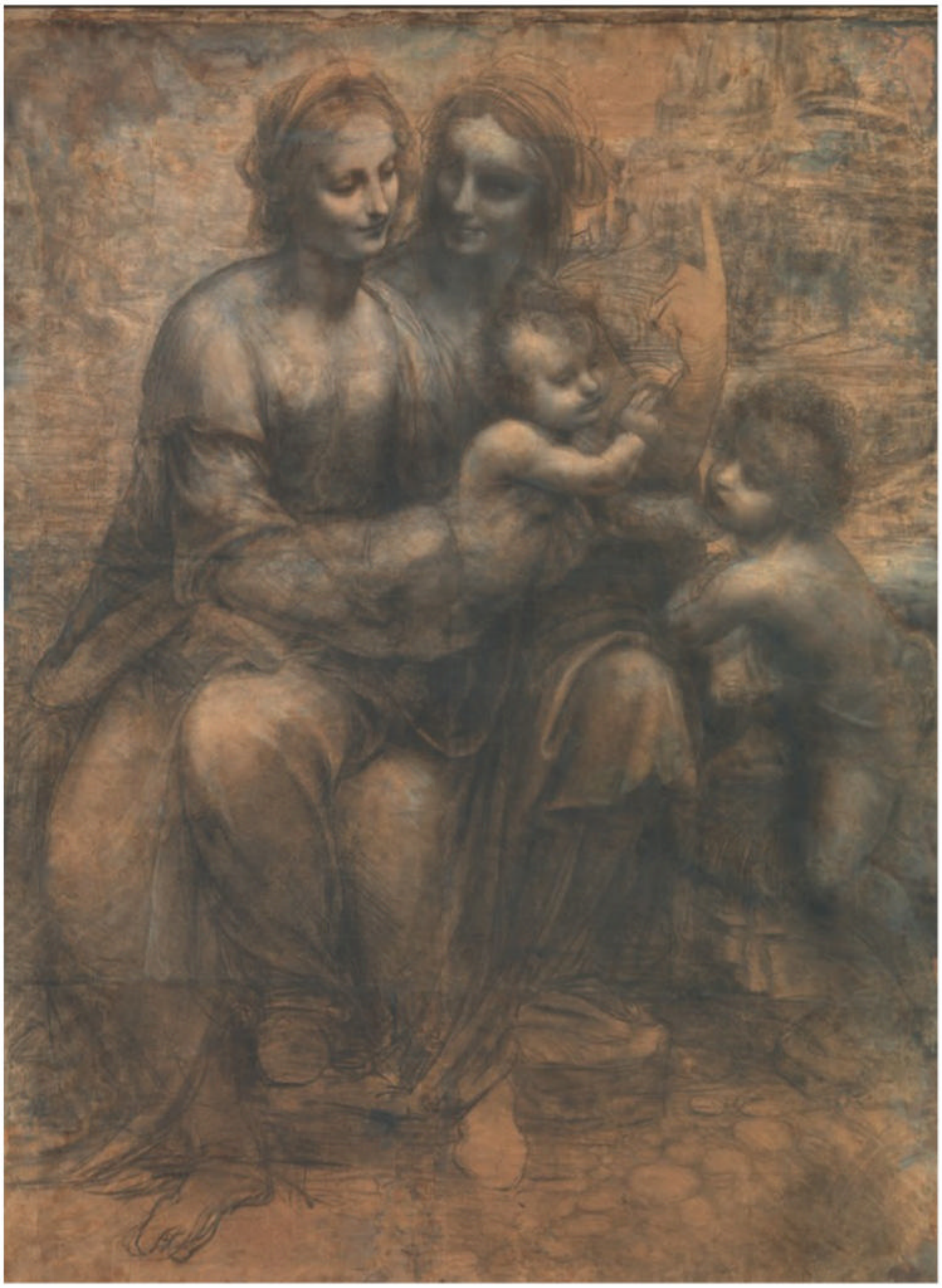
Completing the trio was young Raphael, a contemporary of Michelangelo's. A letter of recommendation calls him "a painter of Urbino, who, greatly gifted in his profession, has determined to spend time in Florence to study." Raphael's friend, merchant Taddeo Taddei commissioned Michelangelo to sculpt a marble relief tondo (circular composition) the *Taddei Tondo* or *The Virgin and Child with the Infant St John*. The tondo was a quintessential product of the Florentine Renaissance and, though ecclesiastical in appearance, was intended for the merchant's home. In later years, Raphael reworked this tondo in drawings and paintings, *Bridgewater Madonna* the Christ child's twisting body echoes the angle from Michelangelo's original.

The way Michelangelo influenced Raphael is also traced through drawings. Later Raphael reworked the *Taddei Tondo* and in the painting *Bridgewater Madonna* the twisting body of the Christ child echoes Michelangelo's work. On display too is what Domercq describes as "a very large drawing of David but not the expected view as he draws it from behind."

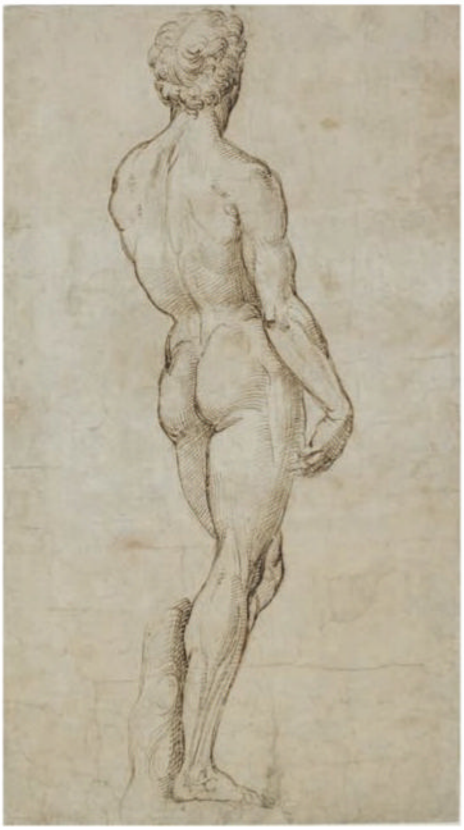
Elsewhere, Leonardo da Vinci's influence comes into focus, another Raphael painting *Esterhazy Madonna* shows how "he takes much from Leonardo, different poses and offers more sense of landscape in the background." In the exhibition's final section tension between Michelangelo and Leonardo is glimpsed through the prism of their commissions, painting two murals for the council hall of Palazzo Vecchio, the seat of the Florentine Republic. Da Vinci said "Art is never finished, only abandoned," and this is apt, as both frescoes are uncompleted, depicting a pivotal battle in Florence's history. Of this artistic



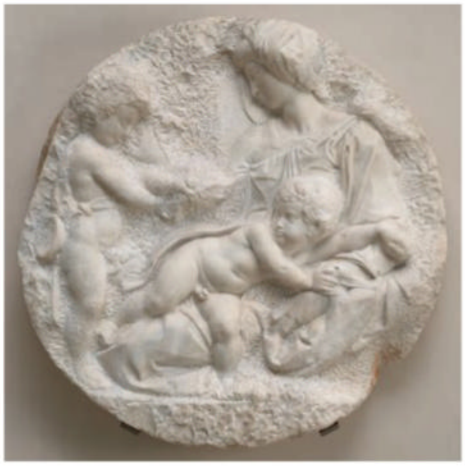
TEYLERS MUSEUM, HAARLEM



THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON



MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI, DAVID, C. 1505-08. PEN AND BROWN INK ON PAPER, 39.6 X 21.9 CM. © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM



ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS, LONDON

rivalry Domercq says it's acknowledged that "they're two great artists but the show reveals how different they were. Leonardo's works are much more busy and full of lines, Michelangelo is more controlled, one figure at a time; he's a sculptor, thinking of these massive shapes, Leonardo is much more in the flow."

He adds, "When you asked Leonardo for a battle scene he was interested in the clash of horses, riders and armour, the brutal reality. Michelangelo chooses to show before battle when soldiers are bathing in the river in July; he captures – in a modern way – the moment the alarm sounded, and they scramble to get dressed and run towards battle… a snapshot feeling of immediacy. For Michelangelo the sculptor it's all about emotion communicated through the body and the muscles, much more than expression on the face."

LEFT *Male Nude*, Michelangelo, oil on canvas, 57.8x44.5cm **ABOVE** *The Virgin and Child with St Anne and the Infant St John the Baptist*, Leonardo da Vinci, 1506-08, charcoal with white chalk on paper, 141.5x104.6cm **TOP RIGHT** *David*, Raphael, 1505-08, pen and brown ink on paper, 39.6x21.9cm **BOTTOM RIGHT** *The Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John (The 'Taddei Tondo')*, Michelangelo, 1504-05, marble, 106.8x106.8cm

The exhibition closes on two drawings by Raphael, one a silverpoint drawing; silverpoint's delicacy giving "incredibly fine lines. But you can't erase anything, every mark counts but it also allows you to be really precise which is Raphael, he's a very controlled artist." One drawing- of a saint- from the Ashmolean possesses a quirky detail; in its top left corner there's a quick sketch of Leonardo's fresco battle scene and in another drawing, he echoes Michelangelo's bathing composition.

Domercq comments, "Like *David*, he shows them from behind, but in this case, it's not a sculpture, it's a flat work of art so he's imagining walking through Michelangelo's composition looking back at the bathers, so this really brings it to life. He's interested in those two artists, and engaging with their work. That's what's really fun in this exhibition. You get a sense of art created in front of you, that you're looking over their shoulders, they're copying one another, appropriating ideas, which is very exciting. I think visitors will be surprised by how immediate it feels. These are works that are over 500 years old yet very much alive, it feels like the personalities are present in the room with you."

Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael: Florence, c. 1504 is on until 16 February 2025. royalacademy.org.uk ☐

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STEP-BY-STEP studio

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO PAINT AND CREATE

In this insightful How-To section, professional artists from The British Art Club show you how they perfected their painting techniques. Here, oil artist **ELLY HADJIPATERAS** tells us what she's learnt

1

Tint your canvas

It's overwhelming to start a painting on a white canvas and difficult to gauge the colours and tones. Apply a thin layer of neutral colour – Warm Sienna if your painting will be mainly greens, cooler Raw Umber if it's a portrait. You can use watery acrylic for this tint or oil diluted with lots of thinner. Even it out with a rag and you're ready to go.

2

Don't be put off

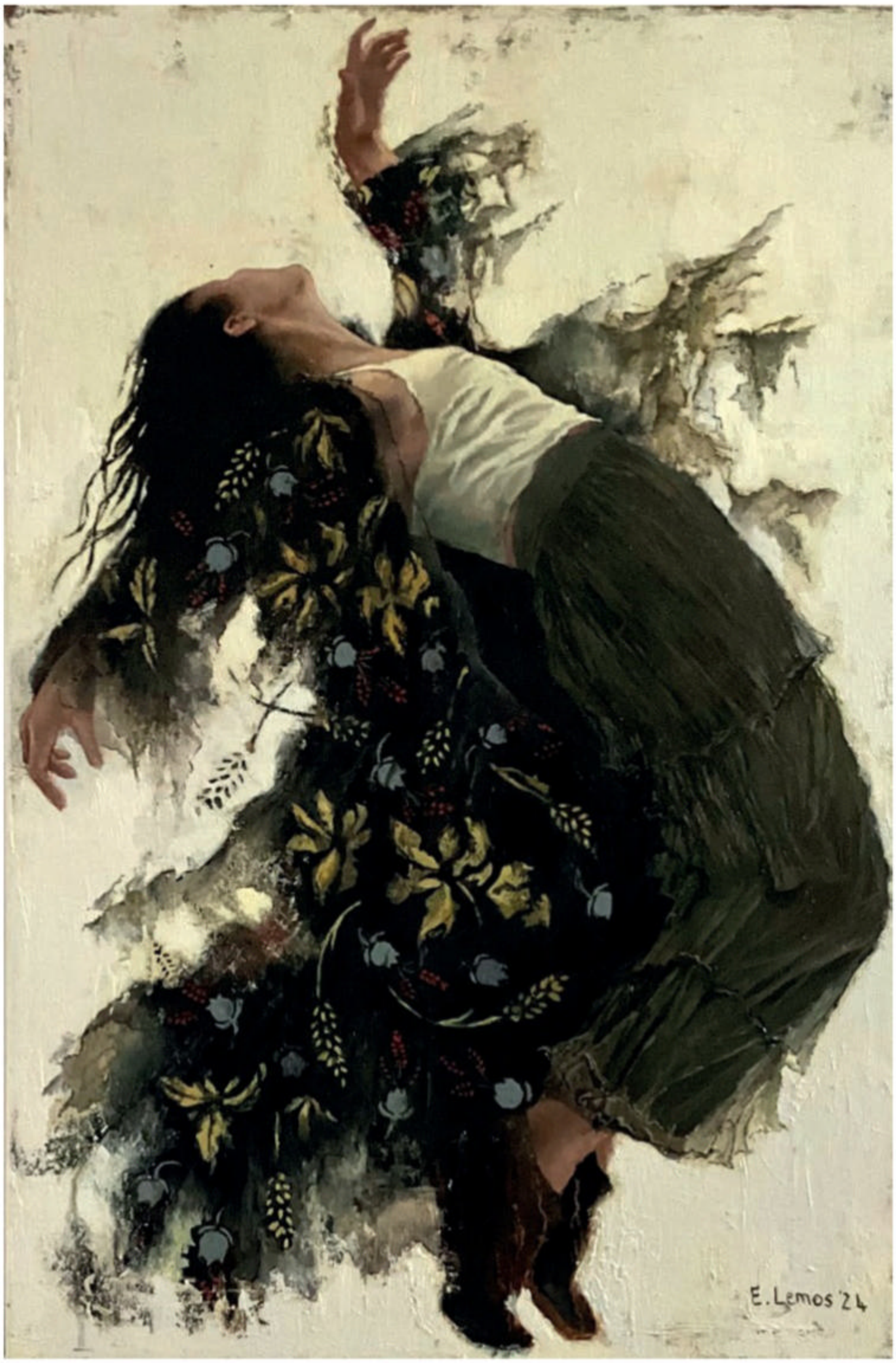
Oils are usually associated with more advanced artists but, in fact, they are the most forgiving of all mediums. You can rub off, scrape back or paint over any mistakes. And because they're slow drying you can take your time leaving each layer to become touch dry before applying the next. If you're a beginner, don't be afraid to experiment. There's no such thing as a bad painting; all your efforts are part of the oil painting journey.

3

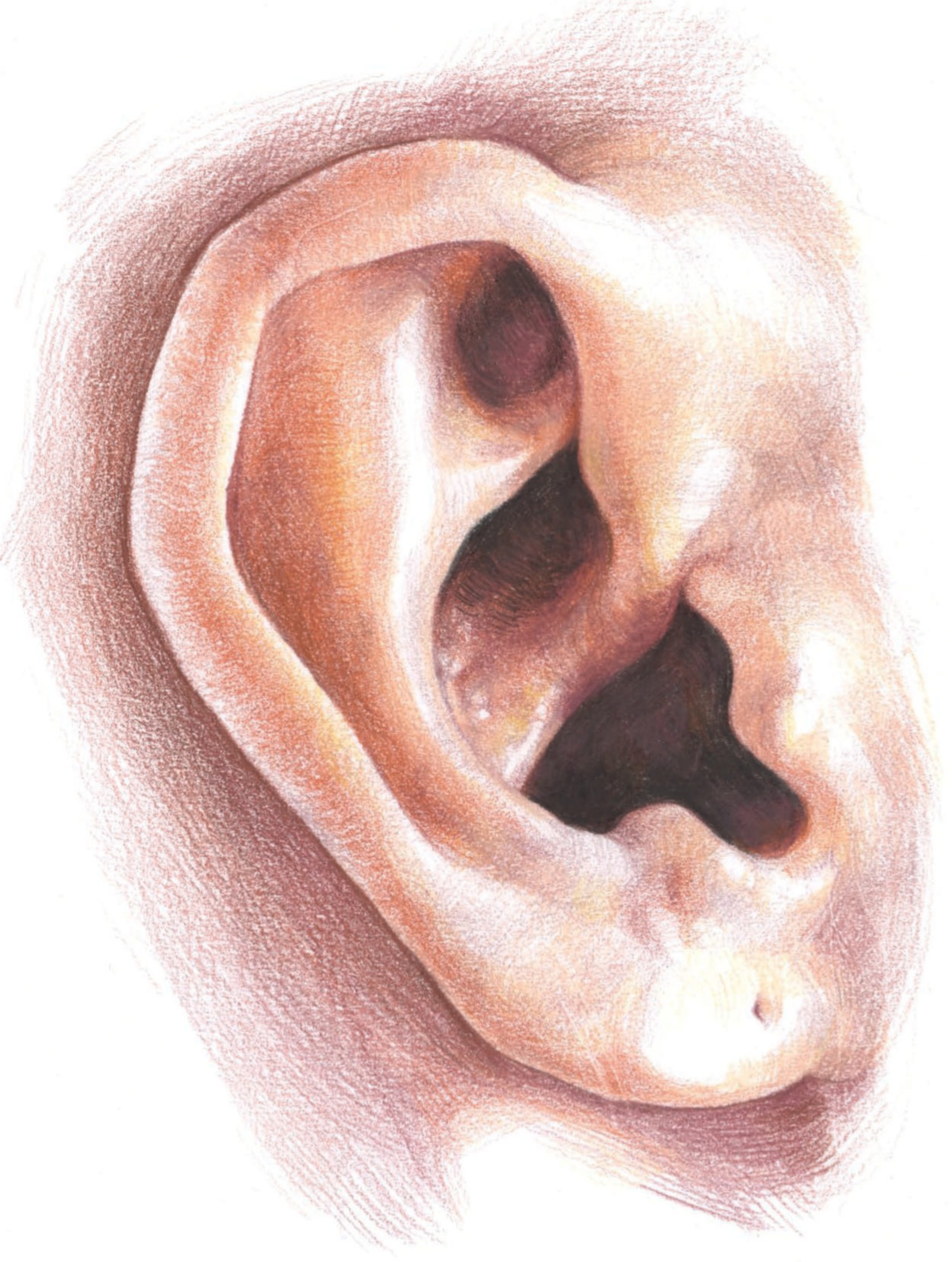
Get your work out there

The positive side of social media is that you use it to your advantage. Share your work regularly on your chosen platform, look out for open calls, local exhibitions and art groups, and engage with like-minded people. But keep in mind, success as an artist doesn't have to mean a solo show in a London gallery. It can be something as simple as gifting a small painting to a friend or trying your hand at a new medium.

ellyhadjipateras.com



KIMONO, OIL ON CANVAS, 78X50CM



Drawing faces: *Ears*

In the penultimate instalment of his series on how to draw different parts of the face, coloured pencil specialist and *Artists & Illustrators* regular **JAKE SPICER** shows you how to draw ears

While the eyes and mouth contribute the most to likeness and expression in a portrait, the structural features of the ears and nose support a good proportion. The ears, sitting at the top of the neck and marking the junction between the hairline and face, are a particularly important reference point for the placement of other features. While the ears' relationship to the eyes, nose and mouth is not fixed, the lobe and the top of the ear can both provide a valuable point of reference to compare features, particular to each pose. The convolutions of the ear itself can intimidate less experienced portrait artists and they are the most regularly omitted feature of the face, hidden beneath a curtain of hair or hurriedly drawn with little attention given to their position. When given the right amount of attention, the ear is a satisfying subject for a study, rewarding anybody who is willing to spend some time drawing the contained landscape of its forms.

Here, I'll be focusing on the ear, with our main step-by-step taken from a profile view of the face, where the ear becomes most prominent. You might want to copy the drawings over the next few pages before applying the process to your own drawings or you might want to adapt the ideas to fit your preferred ways of drawing.

MATERIALS

I've used Derwent Drawing pencils on 140gsm cartridge paper in these drawings; soft colour pencils that can be easily erased with a regular vinyl eraser. You could use any erasable medium to follow along, including graphite pencil, charcoal or pastel.
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ENGLAND
DERWENT DRAWING
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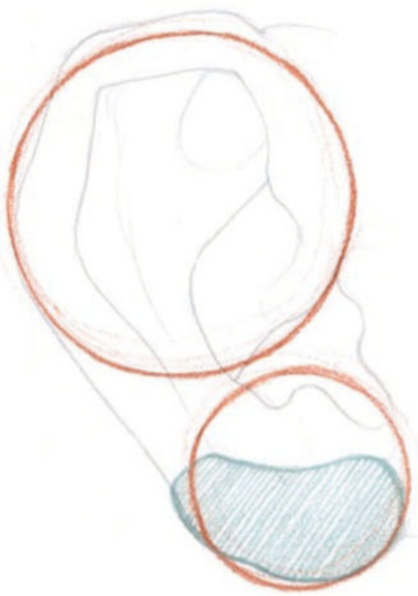
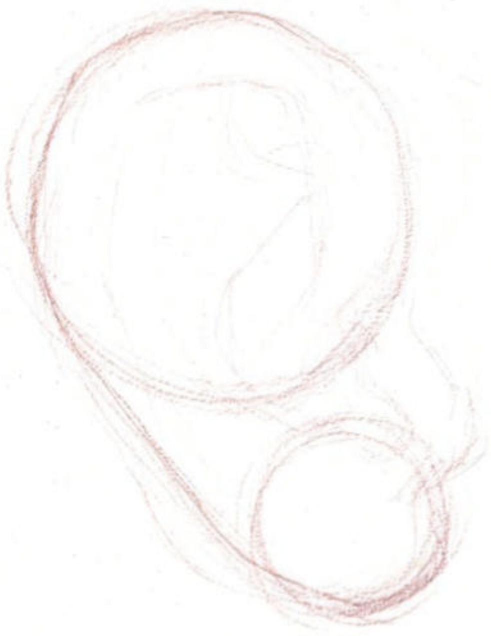
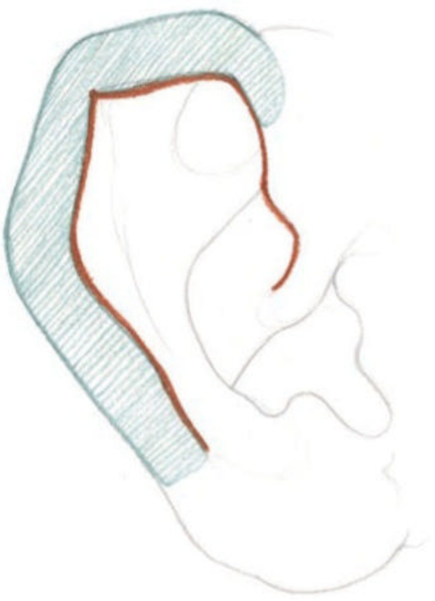
Terracotta 6400
Venetian Red 6300
Ruby Earth 6510
Mars Violet 6470
Warm Grey 7010
Chocolate 6600
Light Sienna 1610



STEP 1: THE OUTER CONTOUR

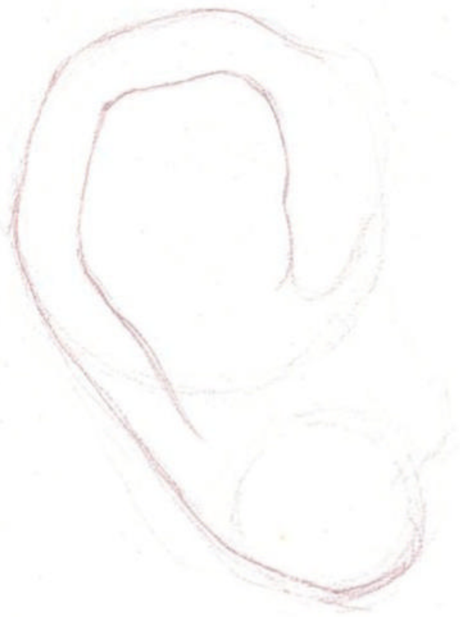
In a quick sketch, the ear can be simplified into three key lines, the first of which is the outer edge. To support my observations of that edge, I like to put in two rough circles, the scale and position of which will vary from person to person, before drawing in the observed outer edge and lightly erasing the supporting shapes. The position and shape of the lobe will be particularly important, bounded by that contour.

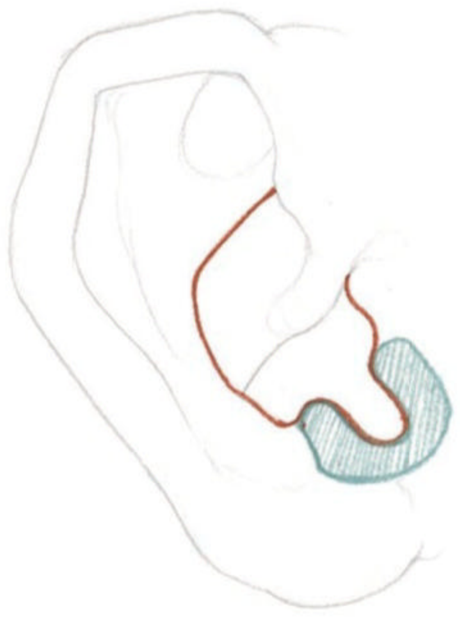




STEP 2: THE HELIX

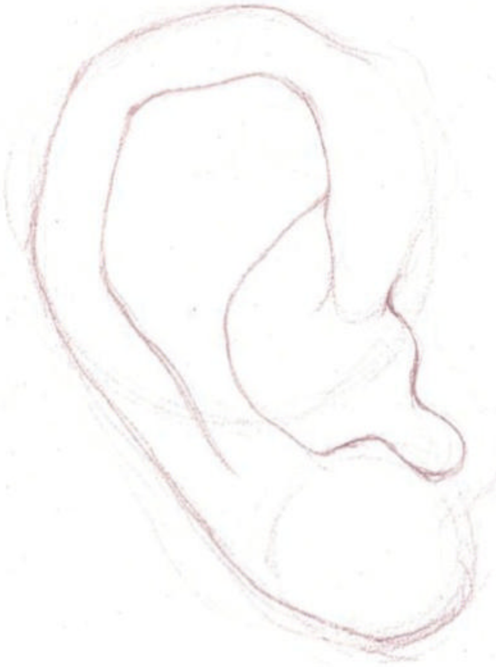
The rounded cartilage that forms the outer part of the upper ear creates the second key line in the shape of the ear, rising up from within the darkened interior of the ear to loop around close to the outer edge – feel the inner edge of that helix on your own ear as you draw it to better understand its shape and how its edge trails off, lost in the soft flesh of the lobe.

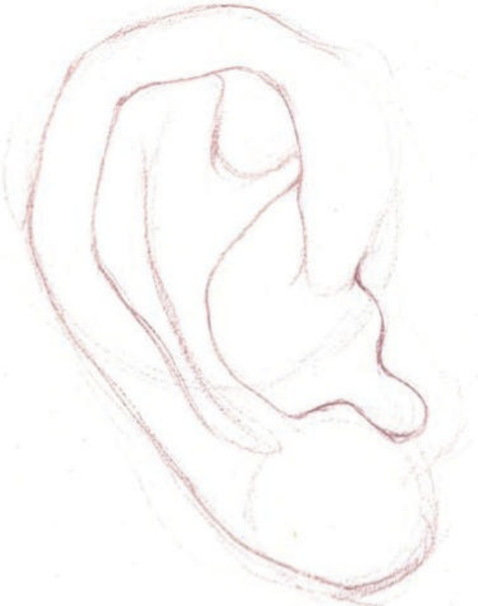




STEP 3: THE TRAGUS AND ANTITRAGUS

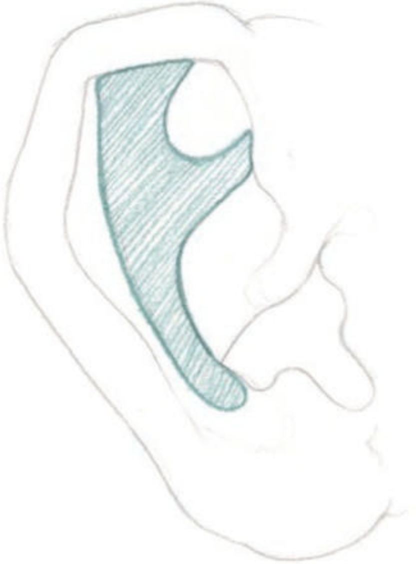
The third key line in the ear forms an edge around the area most likely to be in dark shadow, marking the limit of the antihelix and giving shape to two opposing nodules of cartilage, the tragus and the antitragus. The tragus is particularly easy to find with your finger, a hard lump rising up from the far cheek that protects the ear from debris. This third line might conclude a simple ear drawing.

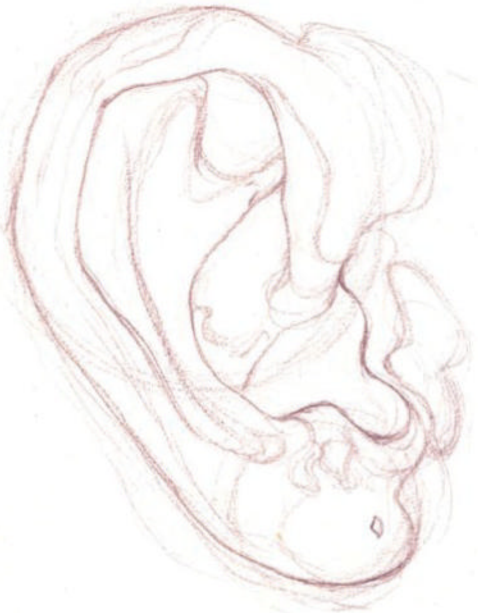




STEP 4: THE ANTIHELIX

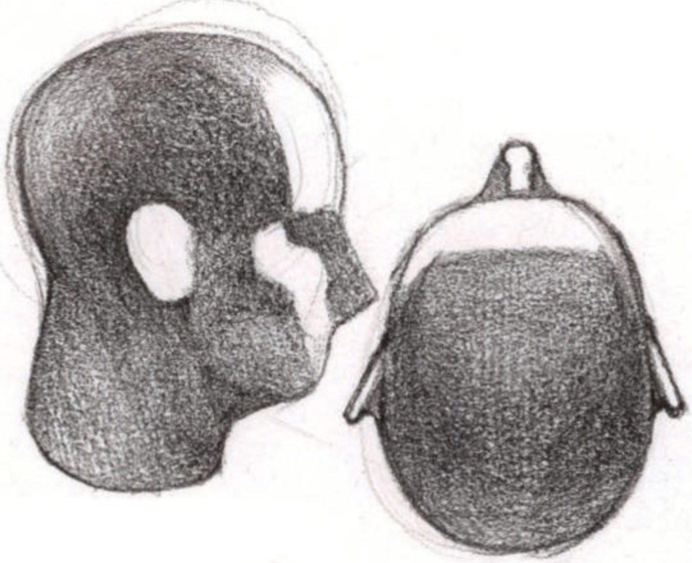
If you're taking your study further, the rounded form of the antihelix will be the next place to focus your attention. It creates a curving 'Y' in the ear, its sloping edges making soft shapes of shadow on either side and enclosing a dark, C-shaped depression between the spokes of the Y.

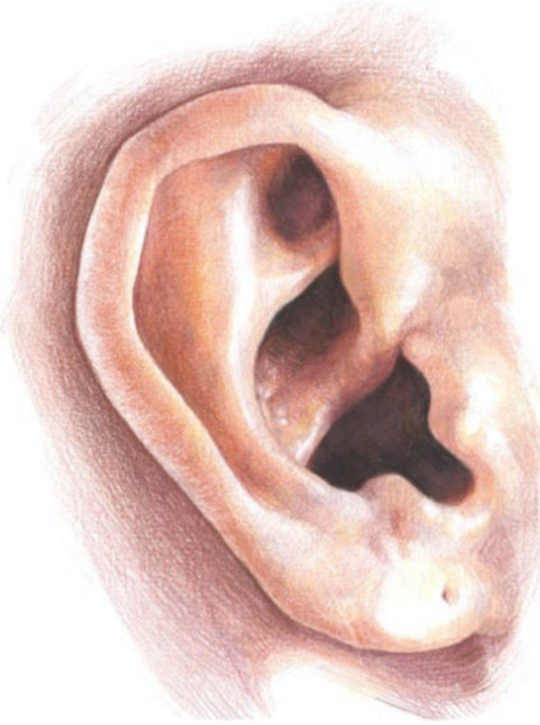




STEP 5: TONAL SHAPES

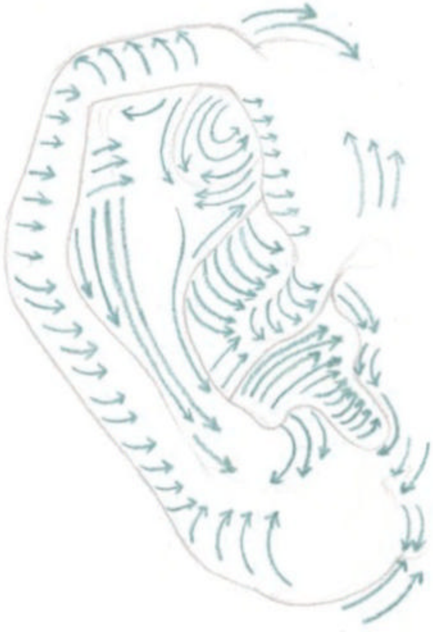
You might choose to take the drawing in a tonal direction, mapping the pattern of light and shadow in the ear. Notice how the ears are tilted forward like satellite dishes; they do not sit in the same plane as the cheek, so under frontal lighting they are illuminated while the cheeks and back of the head fall into shadow, framing their light edges with contrasting darkness.





STEP 6: TONAL MARK-MAKING

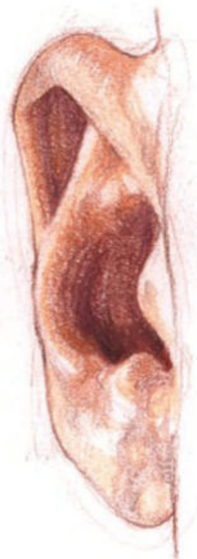
While there is no space here to take you through all the stages of adding tone and colour to this ear study, take a look at the direction of mark-making in different parts of the ear. Think about how you might choose to make your marks in particular directions to emphasise the direction of surfaces in your own ear drawings, emphasising the flow of important forms. ▶

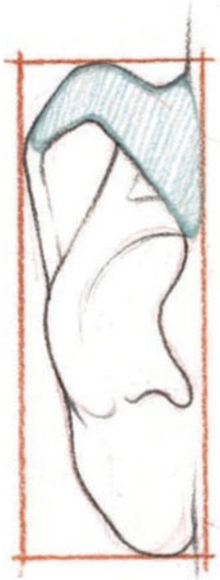


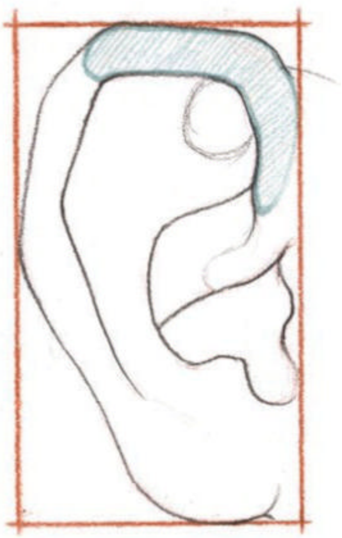
Poses and angles

TURN

We see most of the ear when the head is turned in profile. As a head turns into a three-quarter profile it is the appearance of the second ear that tells us the head is closer to a front-on view. Once the head is facing straight at us, the ear remains the same height but is horizontally compacted, with the curve of the top of the helix becoming one of the most prominent shapes.

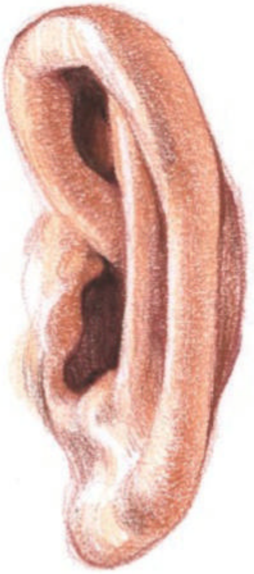


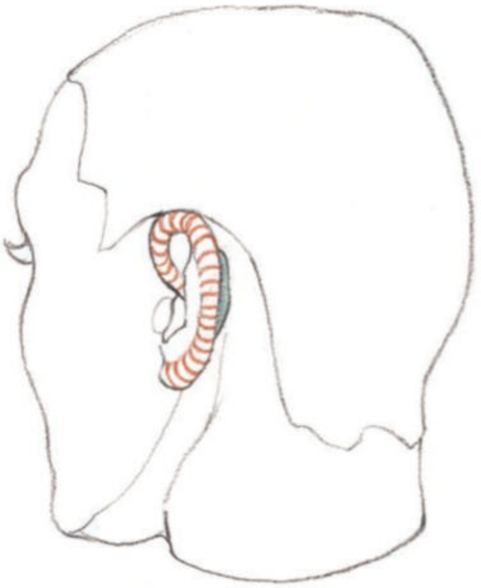




BACK VIEW

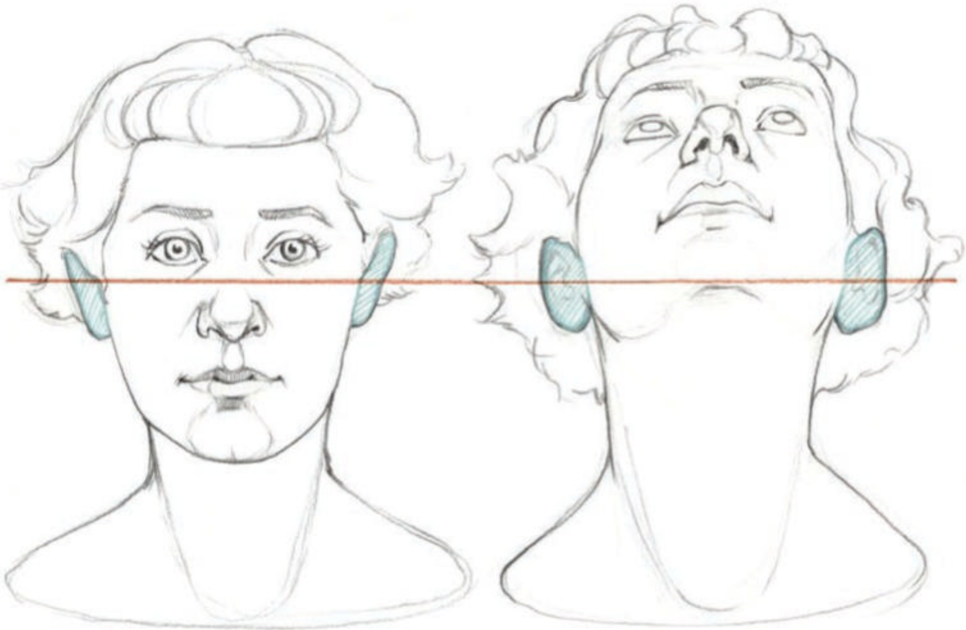
An image of the back of the head can be enigmatic and engaging, with the bumping line of the oblique profile telling us a surprising amount about the face and the character of the subject. In these turns the ear can be the most prominent feature with the curve of the helix prominent and the cartilage that projects the ear forward visible.





TILT

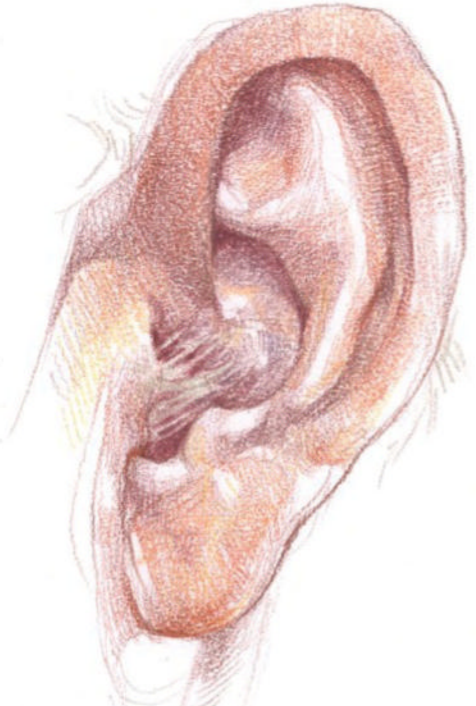
To give us more consistent hearing our ears are sat at the top of our neck, minimising how much they move when our head tilts back and forth. Notice where the ears sit in relation to your model's features and notice how that relationship changes when their head tilts forward or backward.

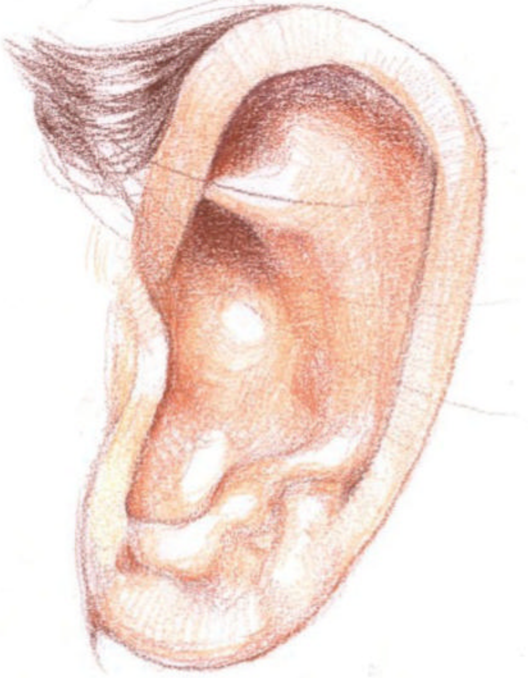


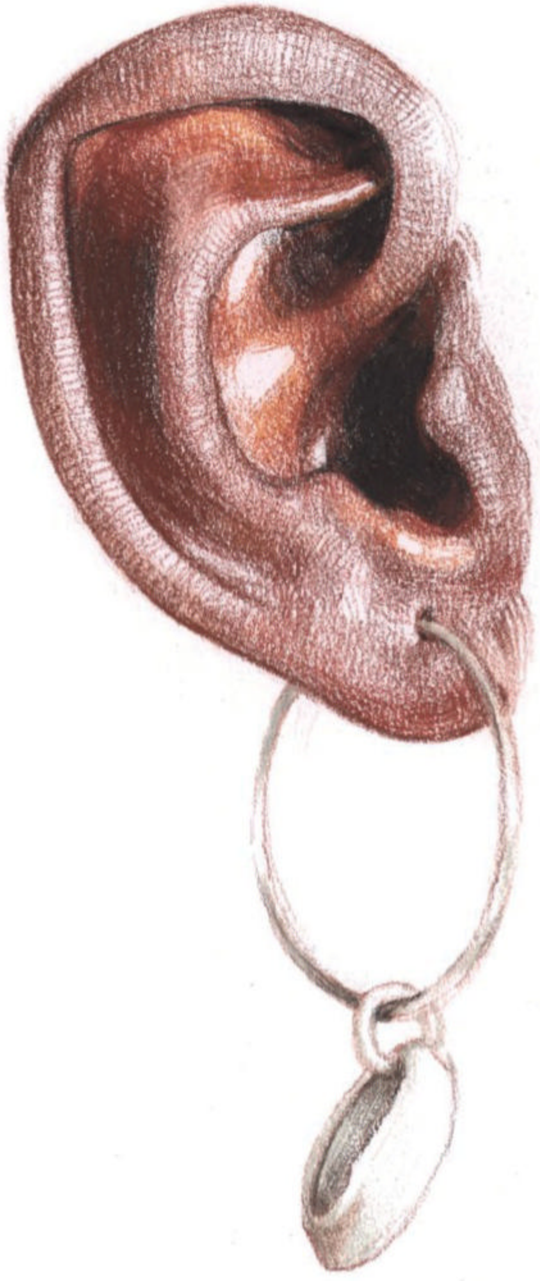
Personal variation

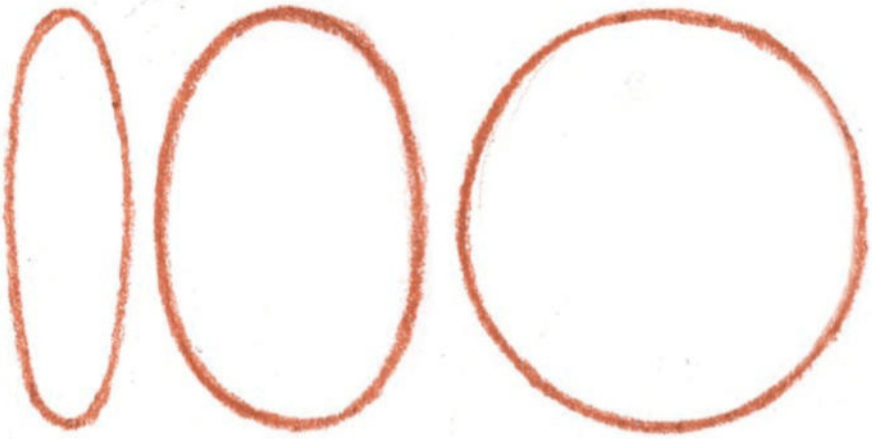
SIZE AND SHAPE

While all ears will share common elements, these forms will express themselves differently in different people, with differences in shape, size and tilt of the ear all affecting how they appear. These differences can extend into injuries, old piercings and hair growth that may even make the left ear different to the right on a single subject.







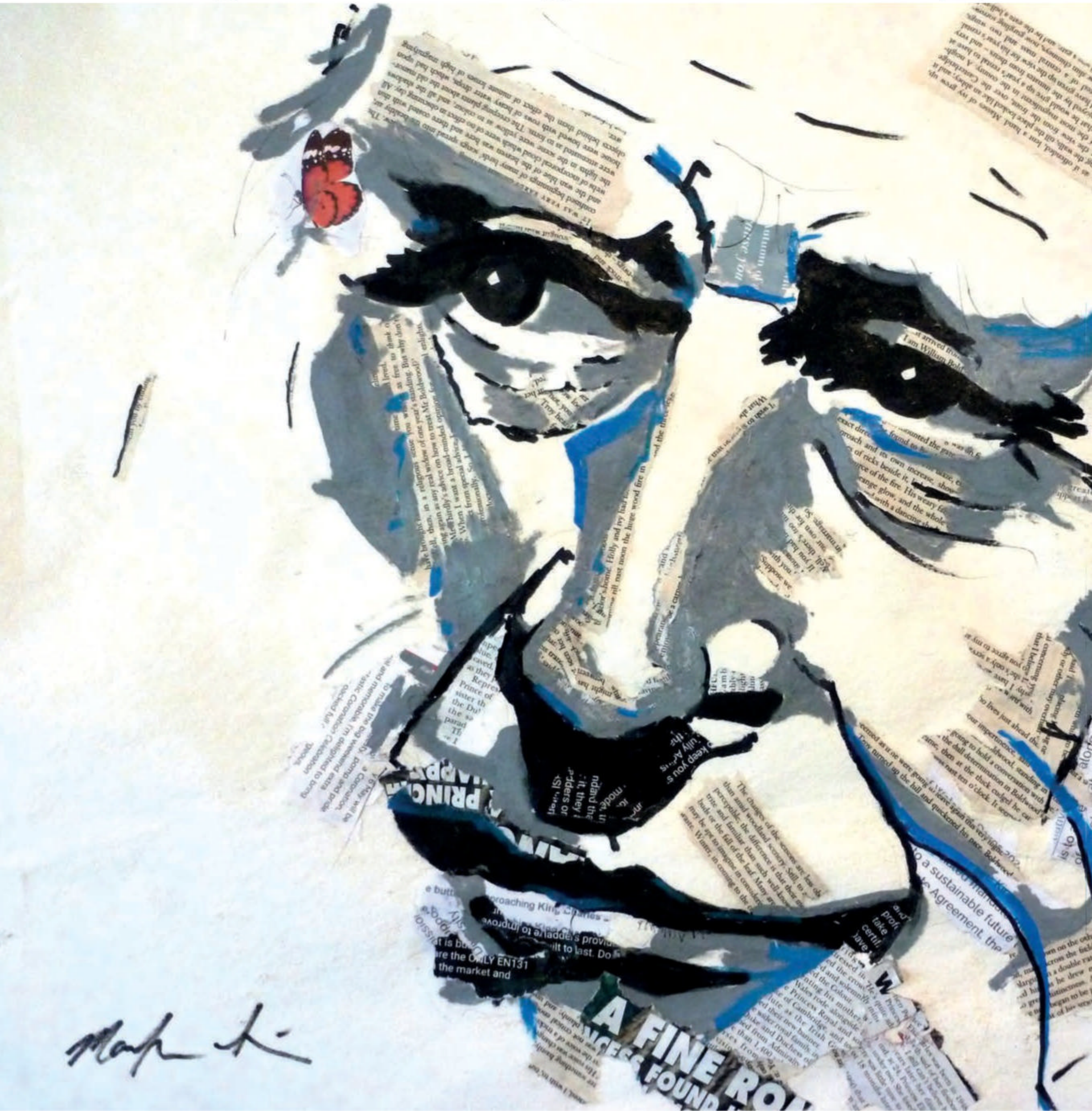


JEWELLERY

Ear piercings are one of the most common forms of body adornment, ranging from small studs to hoops and stretchers. While studs are relatively simple to draw, hoops can present a greater challenge. Notice the shape of the loop of metal in the pose you are drawing it, ensuring that it could rationally continue through the lobe in your drawing and being sensitive to how round it appears, or how compressed an ellipse it is. ◻

NEXT MONTH
Drawing hair

By royal ap


A FINE RO
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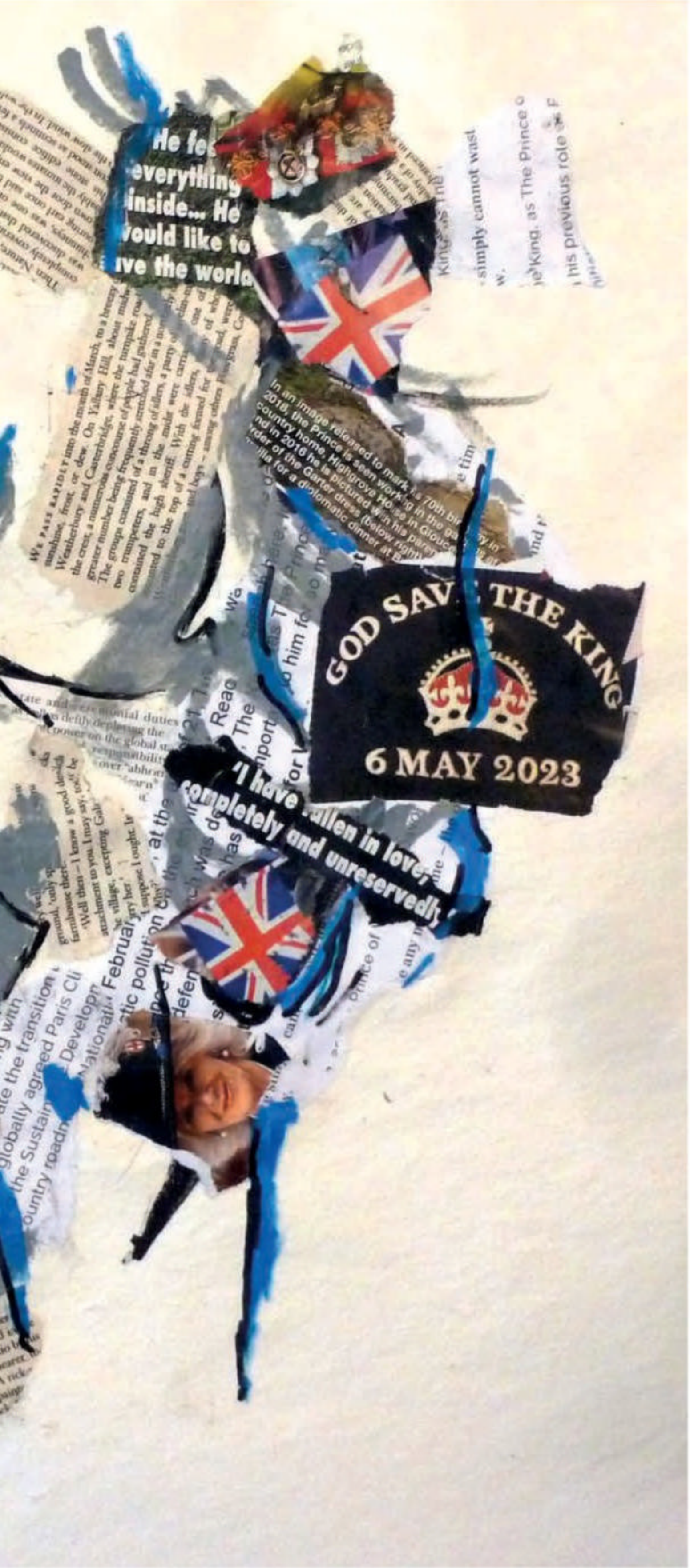


Using oil pens, glue and newsprint from stories relating to the King, **MARILYN ALLIS** created this clever collage portrait of our monarch in mixed media

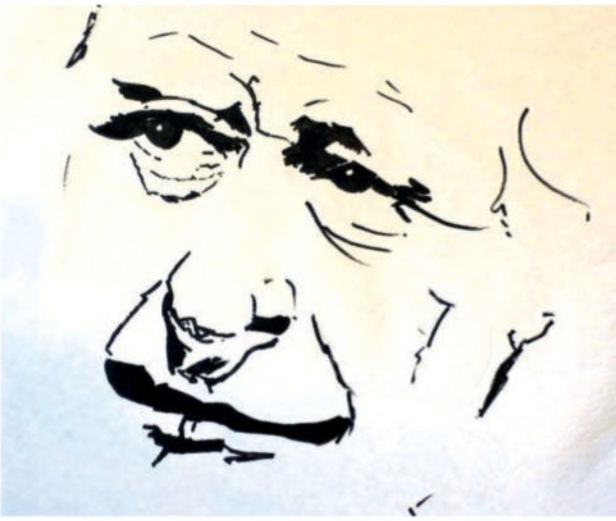
MARILYN'S MATERIALS

Pens
Pebeo oil markers:
8mm glossy grey,
4mm glossy black,
2mm glossy black,
8mm glossy blue
Fine tip drawing pen

Support
Khadi 40lb rough paper (it gives that yellowed look that I want with collage)
PVA glue
Old brush
2b pencil
Collage materials including text from newspapers, old books and magazines

I WANTED TO CREATE a meaningful painting of our King, using words and references that relate to him as a person and what he represents. I love experimenting and this was a great way to achieve a loose portrait in a fun way, that has more to it than just the original image that you see. Initially, you recognise our King but, when you look deeper into the portrait, it tells its own story through the revealing newsprint. I liked the idea of using mixed media, so introduced an oil marker for definition of the darks and then used the words for tone. I also like the feel of losing some of the shape of the face into the paper, so the main features are what defines the image.

This can be applied to all sorts of portrait painting. For instance, wedding couples using paperwork from the actual event or relevant information from the marriage. You can paint children to mark milestones in their lives and even actors and film stars. There are so many ways you can take this. I love the unlimited options it inspires.

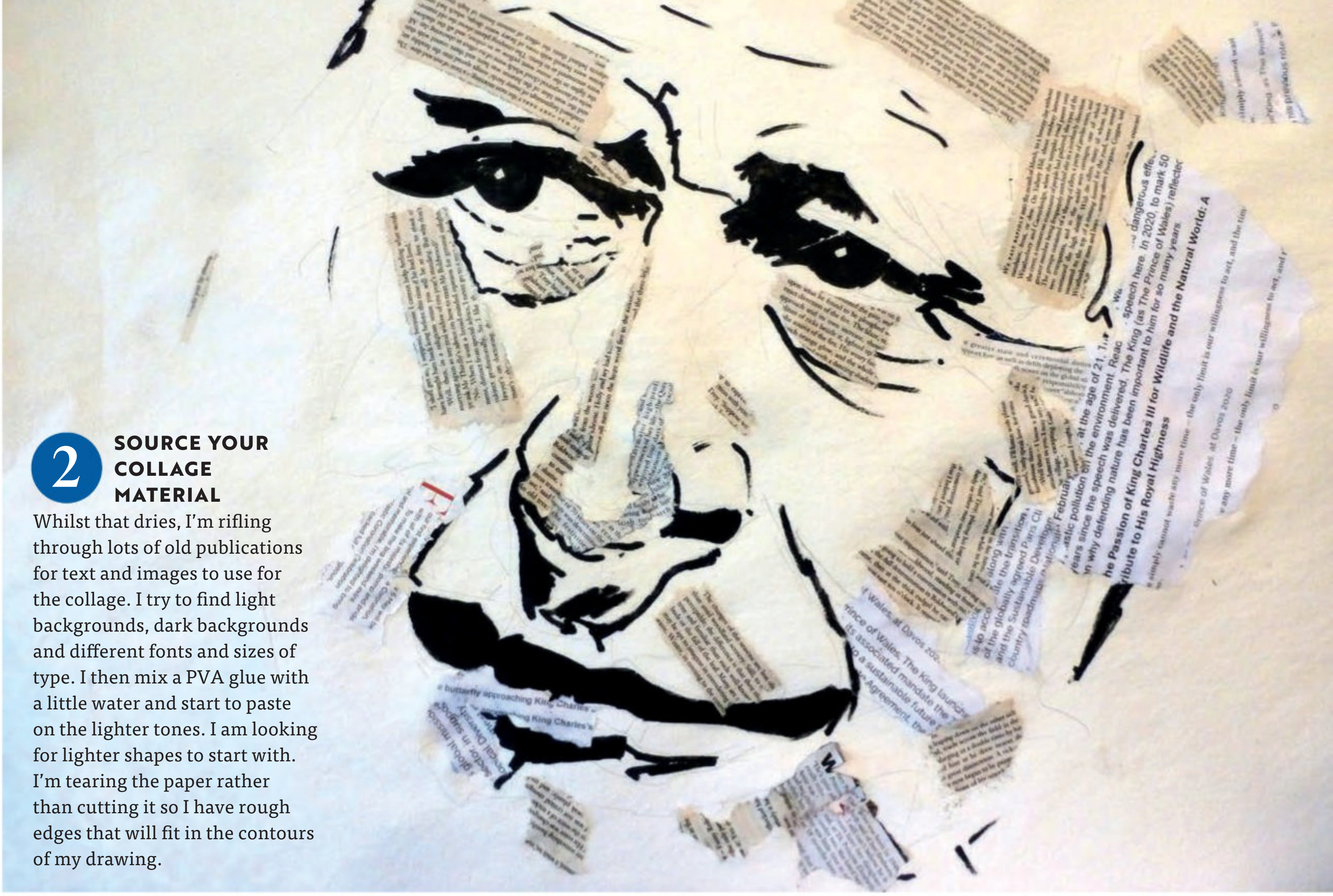


1 START WITH PENCIL

I am using a handcrafted Khadi rough paper 40lb which I love as it appears quite old and the off-white colouring is perfect to compliment the collage. I drew a few lines in pencil to make sure I was happy with my image before progressing using a black oil marker to show all the very dark tones. Stand back and make sure you have an accurate likeness at this stage. ▶

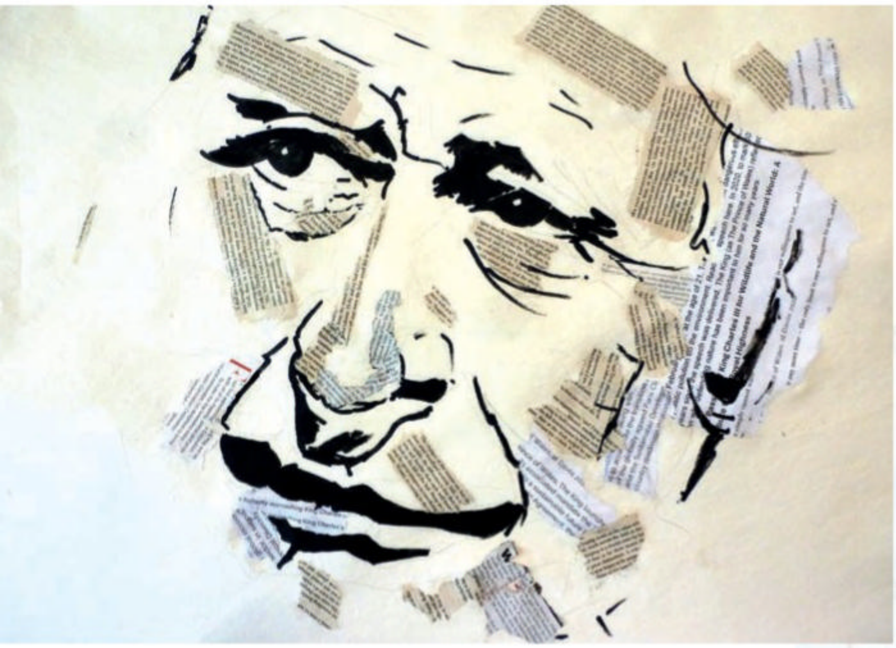
2 SOURCE YOUR COLLAGE MATERIAL

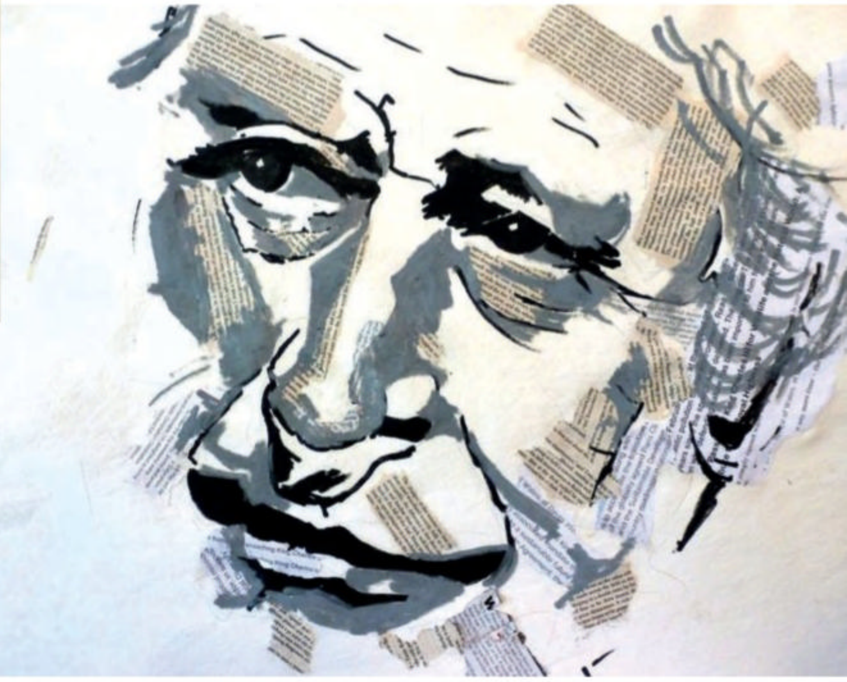
Whilst that dries, I'm rifling through lots of old publications for text and images to use for the collage. I try to find light backgrounds, dark backgrounds and different fonts and sizes of type. I then mix a PVA glue with a little water and start to paste on the lighter tones. I am looking for lighter shapes to start with. I'm tearing the paper rather than cutting it so I have rough edges that will fit in the contours of my drawing.



3 TOUCHING UP

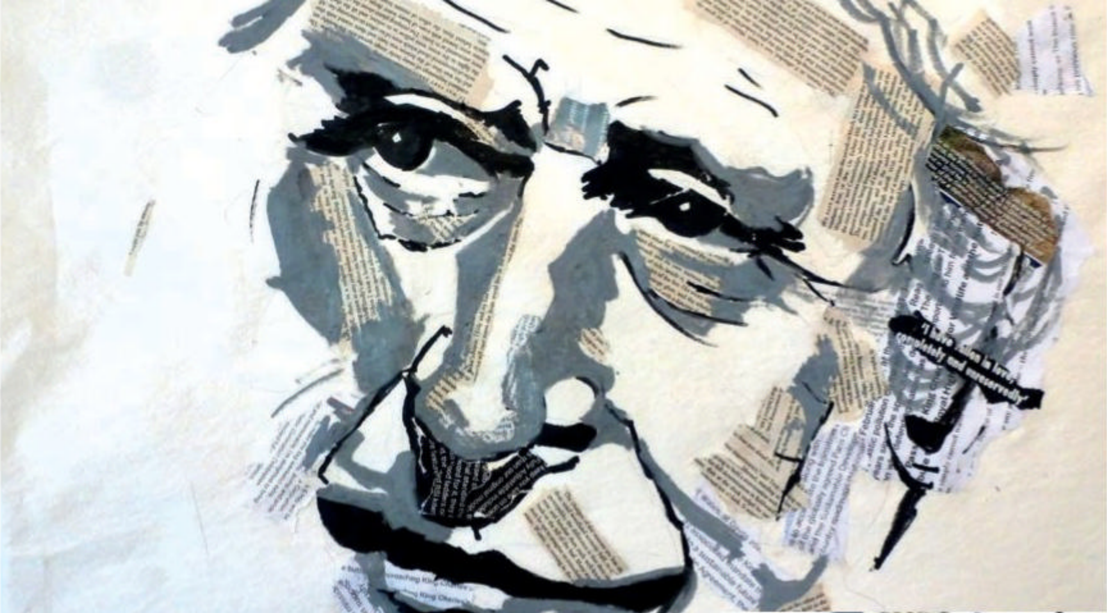
Before I lose the definite darks, I need to touch up any black lines I have lost whilst covering up with collage. These are the lines that will make it work, so I have to be careful to keep them clear. Once the glue is dry, use the 4mm marker to start with.





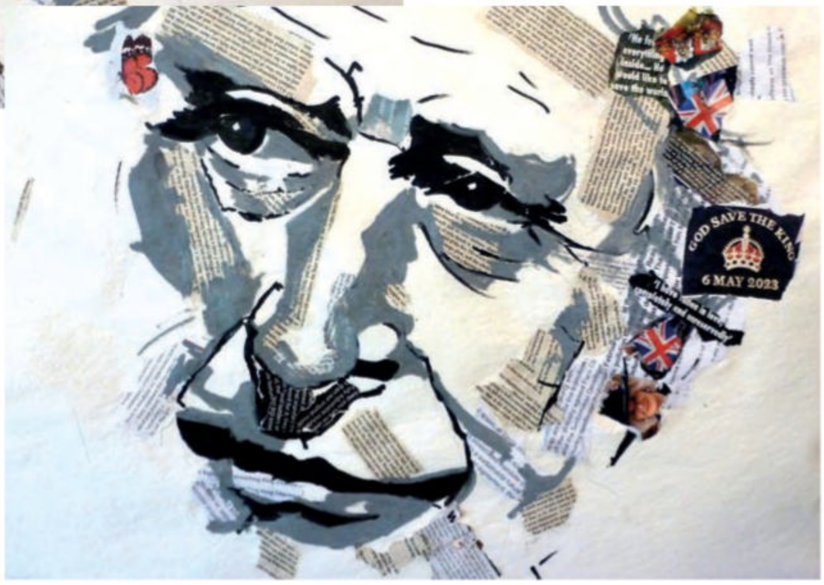
4 STAY CALM

I now need a few medium tones to get the three-dimensional feel, so I'm opting for a grey oil marker to add the middle tones. At any point, I can add more black or the grey oil marker, and also collage. This is very forgiving for a portrait. The key factor is not to panic; anything working in this way can be undone.



5 BE CAREFUL

I'm looking to fill in some of the medium tones with collage. I'm looking at dark grey, medium grey and even black backgrounds for this which I find are best found in magazines. I'm carefully placing these onto the painting using the PVA mix.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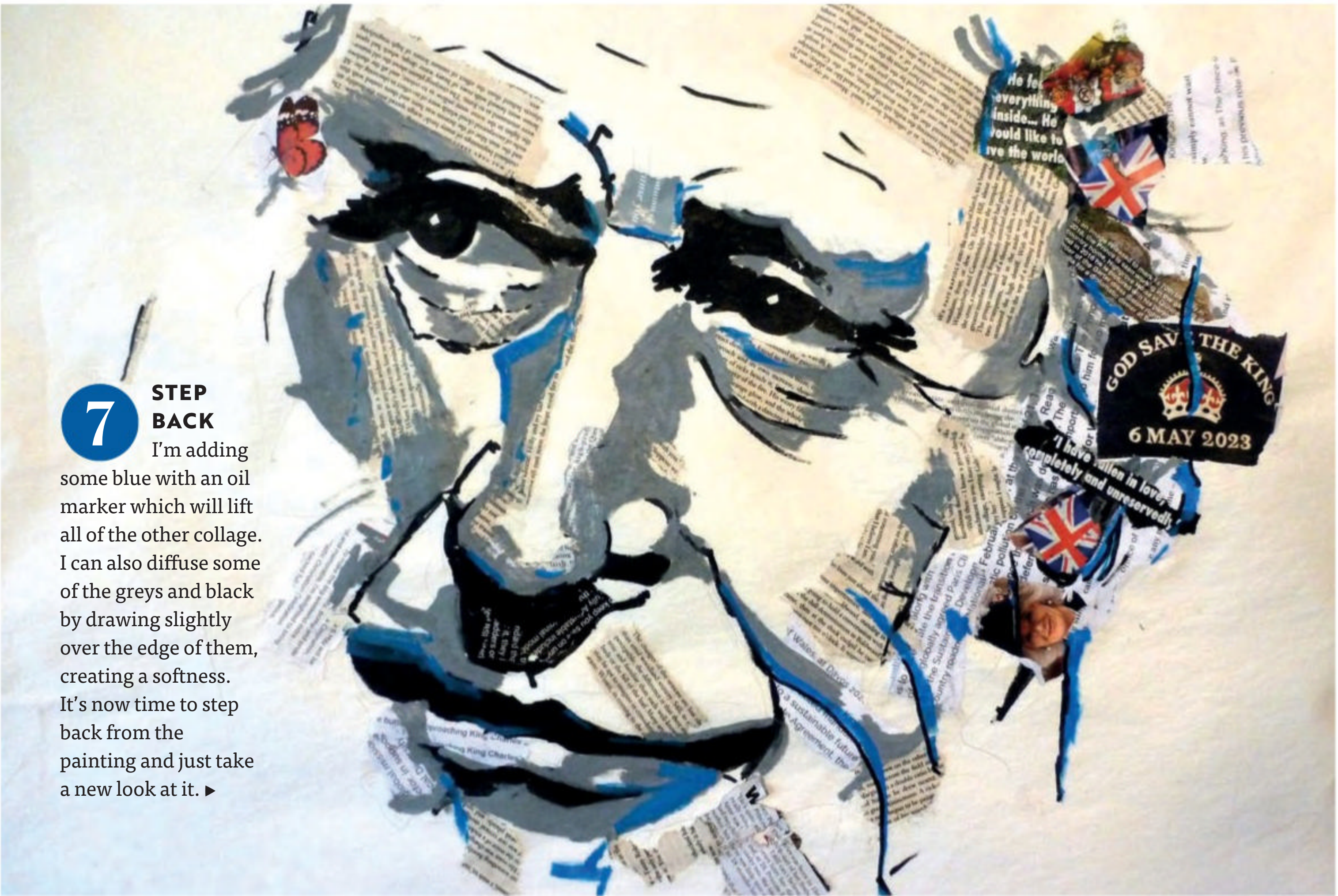
6 MAY 2023

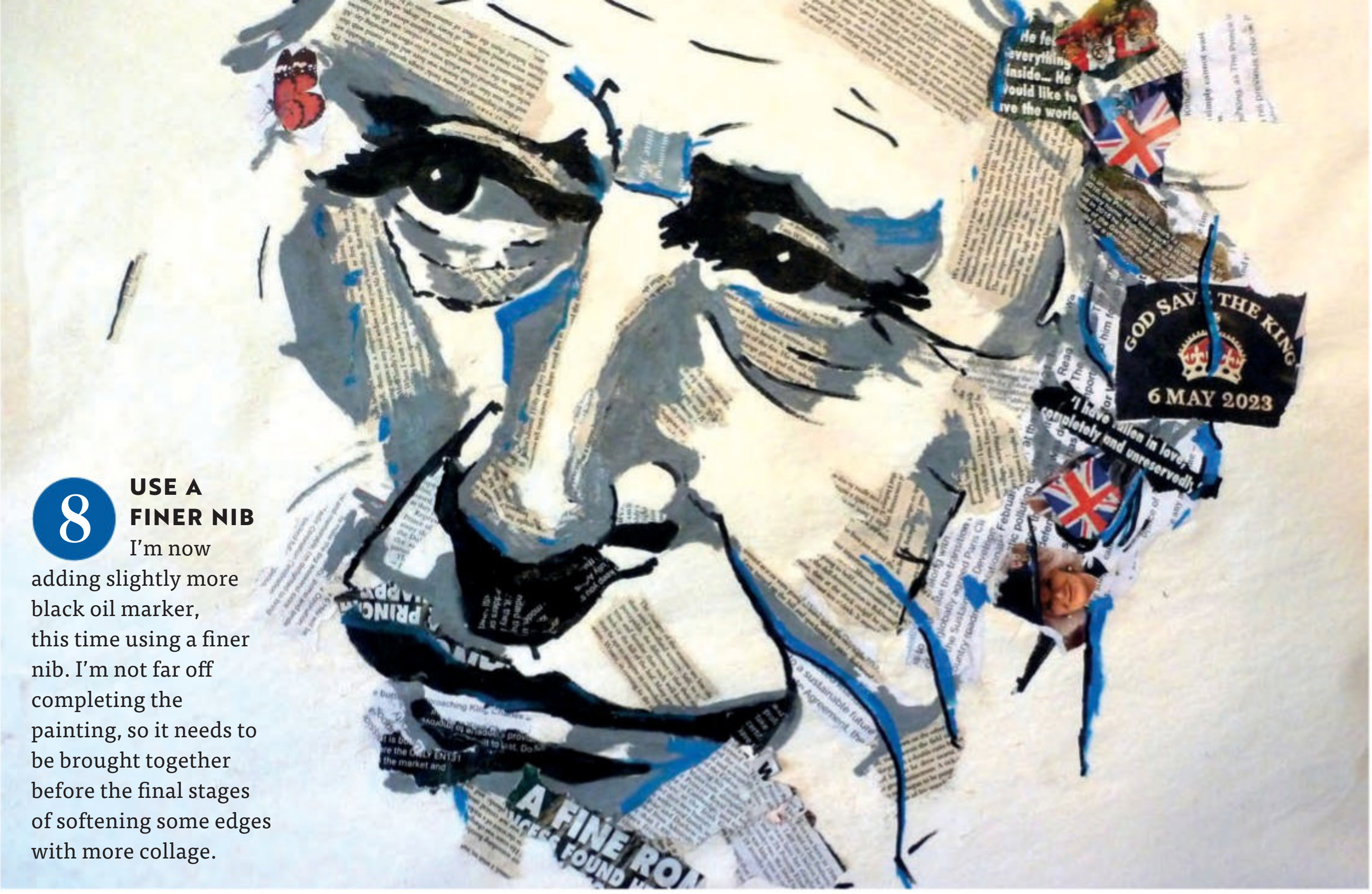
6 PERSONALISE IT

I now have some relevant images and colours in collage to add. I have left it until now to apply these very special reference as they can easily get covered up, and sometimes you don't have spare to use. I have pictures of Camilla, the union flag and a butterfly as these seemed relevant. I now need to work out the best position to place them.


He felt everything inside... He would like to save the world
GOD SAVE THE KING
6 MAY 2023
"I have fallen in love completely and unreservedly"

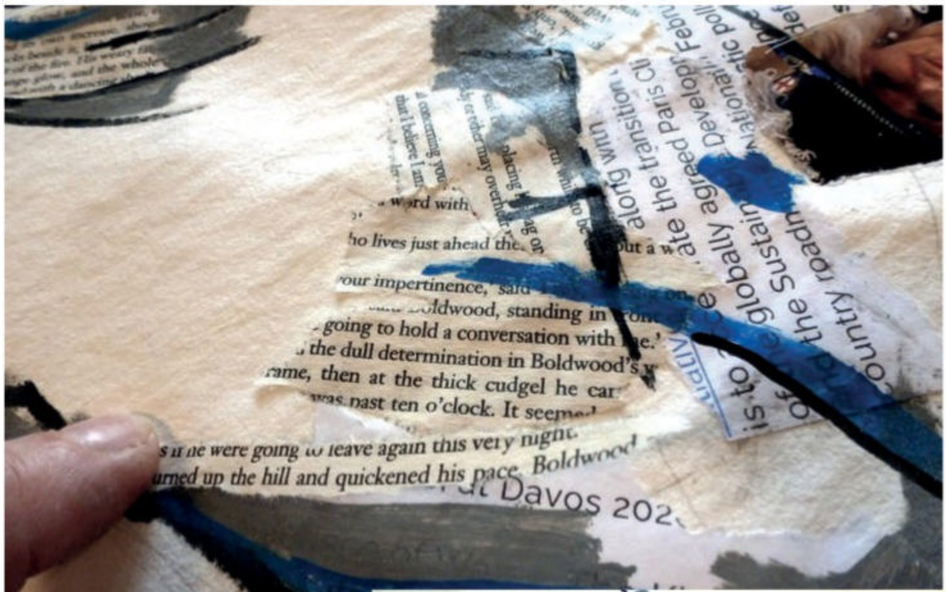
7 STEP BACK

I'm adding some blue with an oil marker which will lift all of the other collage. I can also diffuse some of the greys and black by drawing slightly over the edge of them, creating a softness. It's now time to step back from the painting and just take a new look at it. ▸



8 USE A FINER NIB

I'm now adding slightly more black oil marker, this time using a finer nib. I'm not far off completing the painting, so it needs to be brought together before the final stages of softening some edges with more collage.

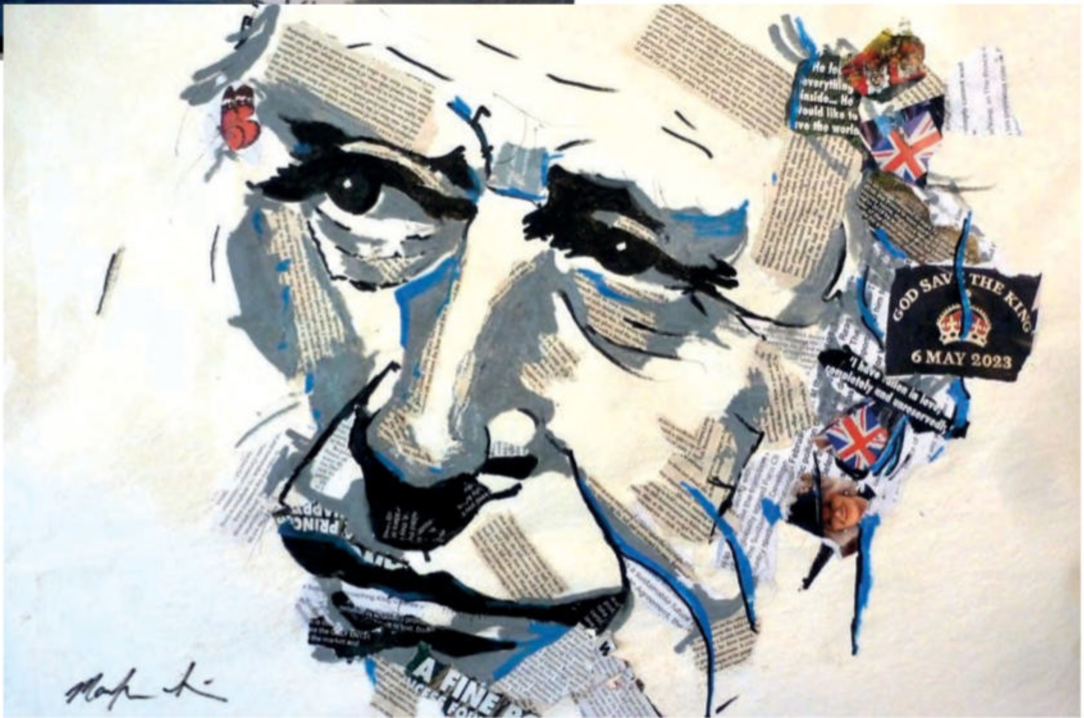


9 TIDY UP

At this point, I'm very happy with my image and I will just soften some edges of the oil pen with small pieces of collage. I'm looking at the tone and really just tidying up a little but not too much. I can use a dark or a white background of paper collage depending on the tone I need.

10 DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY

I'm now adding a few finishing marks with a very fine liner, being careful not to do too many of these and overdo it. If I see anything else that needs adjusting, I can do that now too. I'm really happy with the likeness and the significance of this piece of work. It's always fun experimenting.



Marilyn Allis runs Zoom workshops for art groups and runs painting holidays in Bournemouth.
marilynallis.com ☐

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ANNIS BOOKER

Wet Wexford ramble

SEBASTIAN THOMMEN breaks down how he created this wet street scene in his favourite medium, watercolour

AFTER BEING GIFTED a watercolour set in my early teens, I remember becoming obsessed with drawing and painting buildings, which is a slight mystery as there's no architects in my family. Fast forward to a few years later, when I'm a practicing actor in film and theatre, and the mantra "less is more" became ingrained into my psyche. I believe this can also be translated into paintings. The audience doesn't want to be insulted by everything being spelt out when it can easily be said with just a brushstroke or two, leaving them to engage their imagination for a more pleasurable viewing experience. I believe paintings are a whole lot more interesting when everything isn't spelt out, when just a beautifully crafted shape or stroke says it all, letting the viewer join the dots and have their mind stimulated. I hope I've achieved this with this wet street-scene in Wexford, as it will allow the audience the chance to be part of the never-ending process of the beautiful and entertaining language of art.
sebastianthommen.com

SEBASTIAN'S MATERIALS

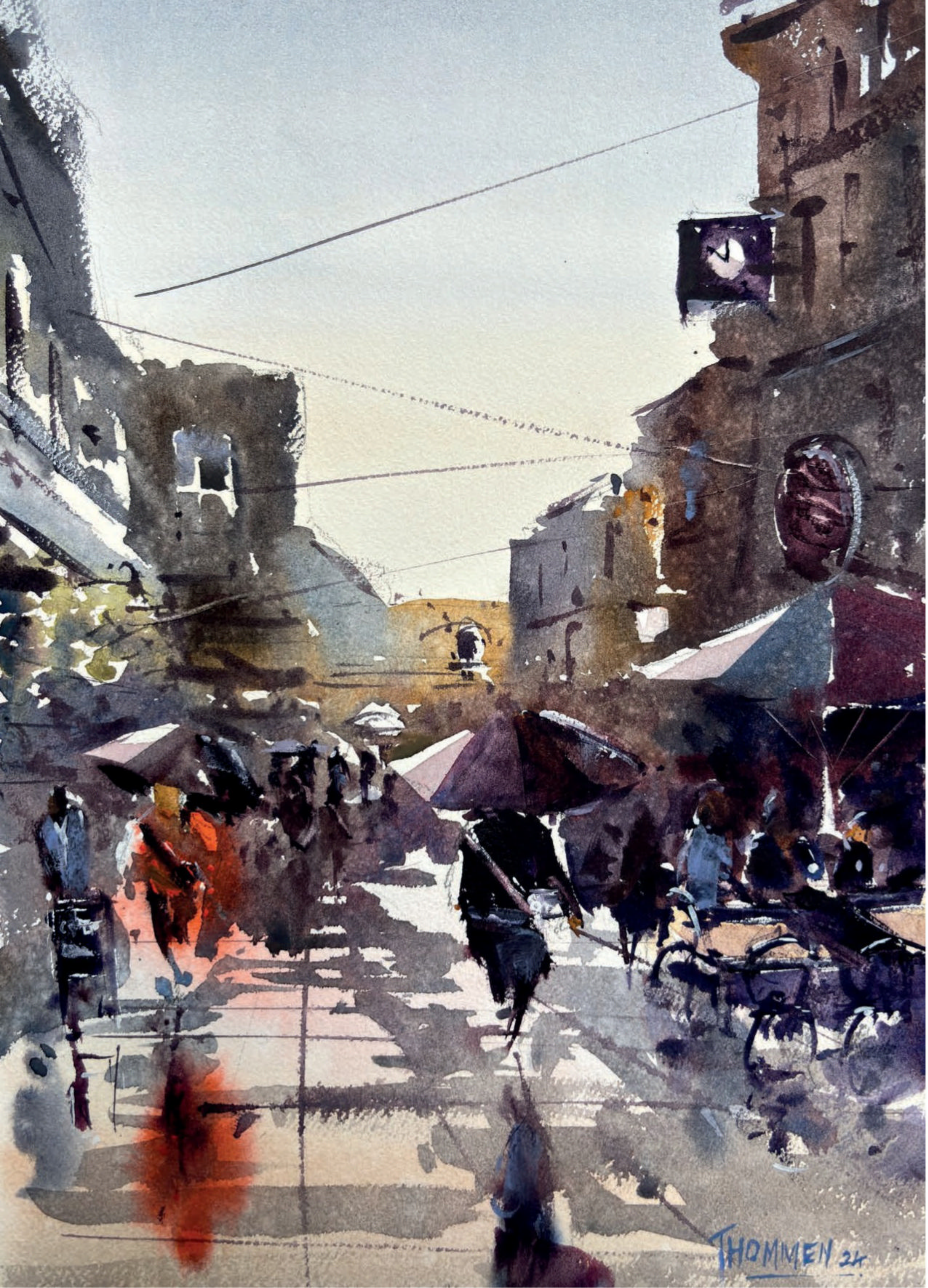
Paint
Daniel Smith Tubes: Cobalt Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Neutral Tint, Alvaro Caliente Grey, Alvaro Fresco Grey, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Alizarin Crimson, Cadmium Red, Lavender, White Gouache

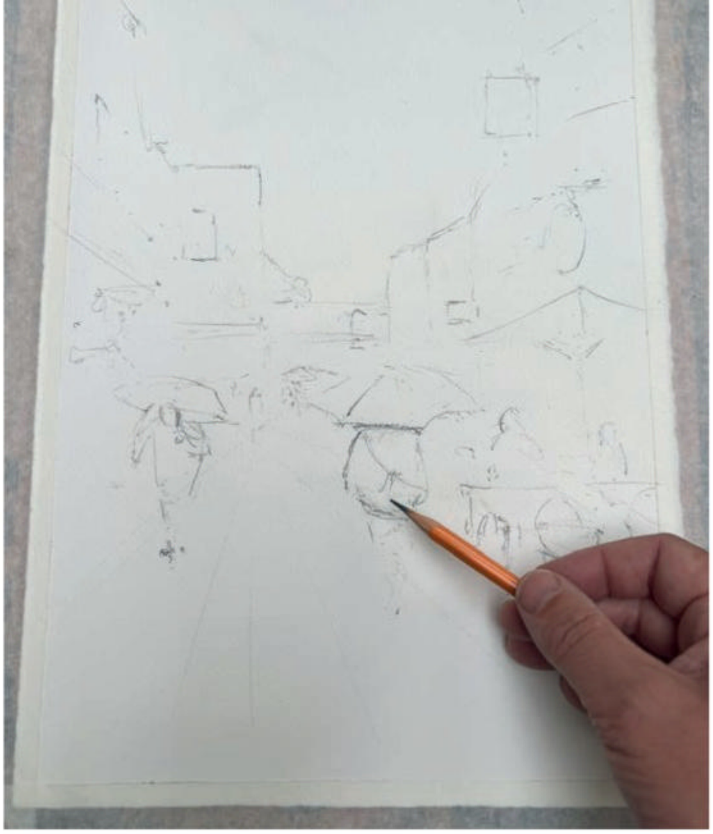
Brushes
Escoda Ultimo #16, Escoda Ultimo #10 (travel brush), Escoda Versatil #10 (travel brush), Escoda Perla #8 (travel brush), Neef Needle Point #10

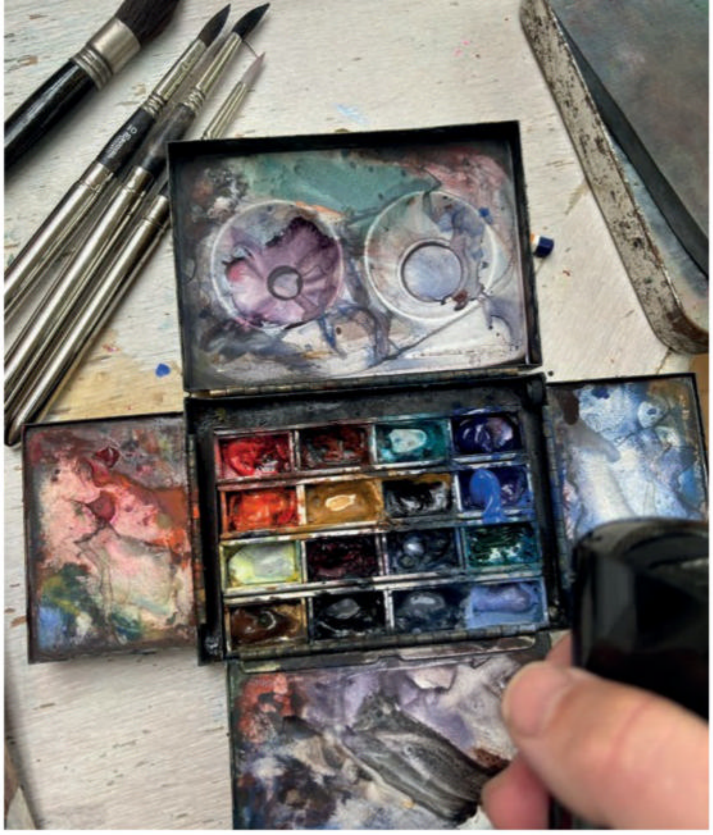
Paper
Baohong 300g Cold Pressed. Rough. Quarter Sheet

1 TAPING DOWN THE PAGE

I buy my 300g cold pressed sheets full and I fold and tear them into quarters. As the sheet isn't very big, I'm confident that the page won't buckle. I like to tape it onto wooden plyboard so I can rotate and adjust the angle easily as I paint. This one has a rough texture which enables me to achieve nice dry brush marks. ▶


THOMMEN 24



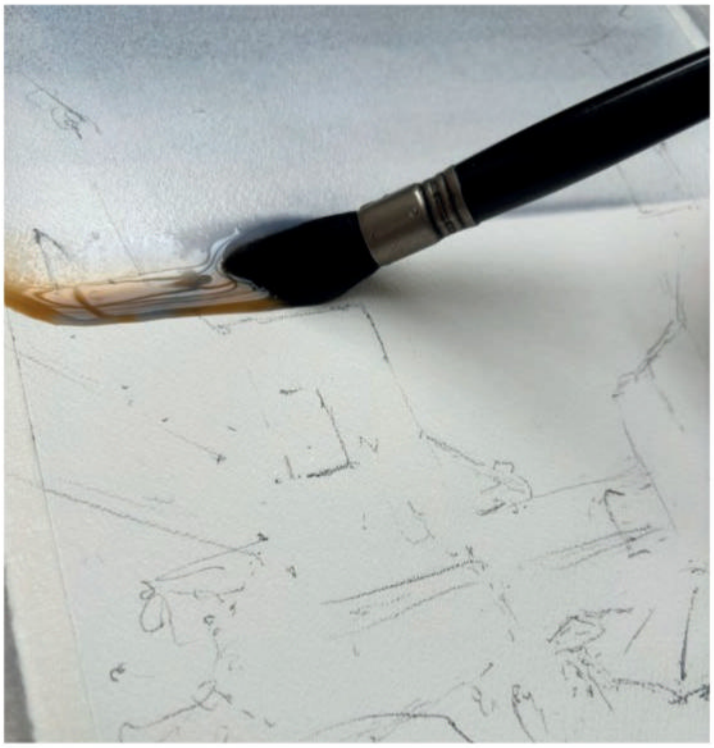


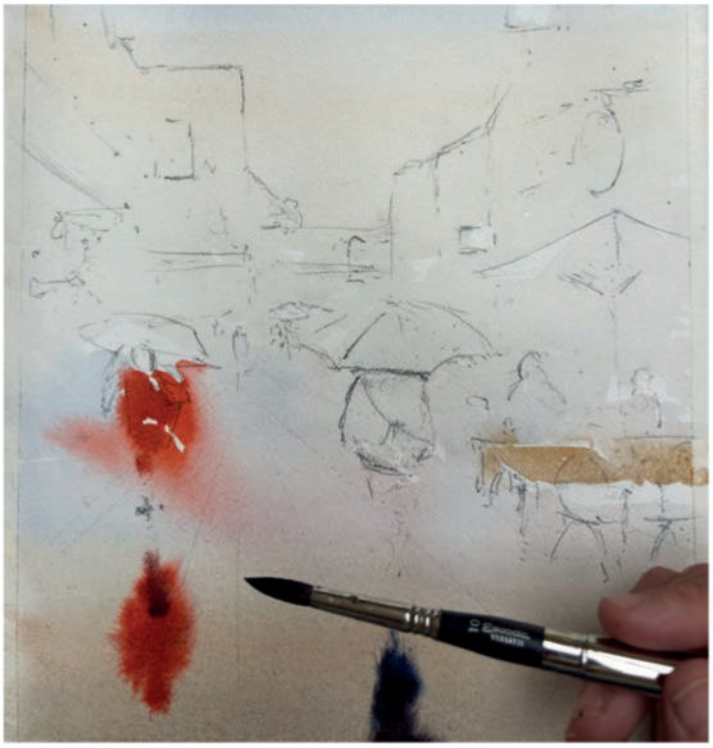
2 DRAW THE ESSENTIALS ONLY

I originally painted this particular scene under the awning of a pub on a rainy day in Wexford town. It's nice to continue on the experience and break it down in the comfort of the studio, with the objective of staying true to the feeling of the day. With a 3B pencil, I drew in all the big shapes first. I like to draw lines slightly shorter than you would expect. This helps me be free when I'm painting and stops me from treating it like a colouring book, enabling me to be loose and free.

3 KEEP IT DIRTY

I hydrated my dirty pallet with a barber's atomiser. I rarely clean my palette as the greys that are left over from the previous painting can prove useful for the current one. As you can see, I keep all my cool colours on one side and my warm colours on the other. I keep my blue sponge in an old mathematical tin. These sponges are very useful as they hold a lot of water.





4 BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR WATER

The aim of the first wash is to get rid of the white paper; you're just tinting it with warm and cool colours that will contribute to the overall tone and atmosphere of the painting. But don't forget to leave any small highlights where light is hitting off your characters and objects. Use lots of water; if you don't have a bead then you don't have enough.

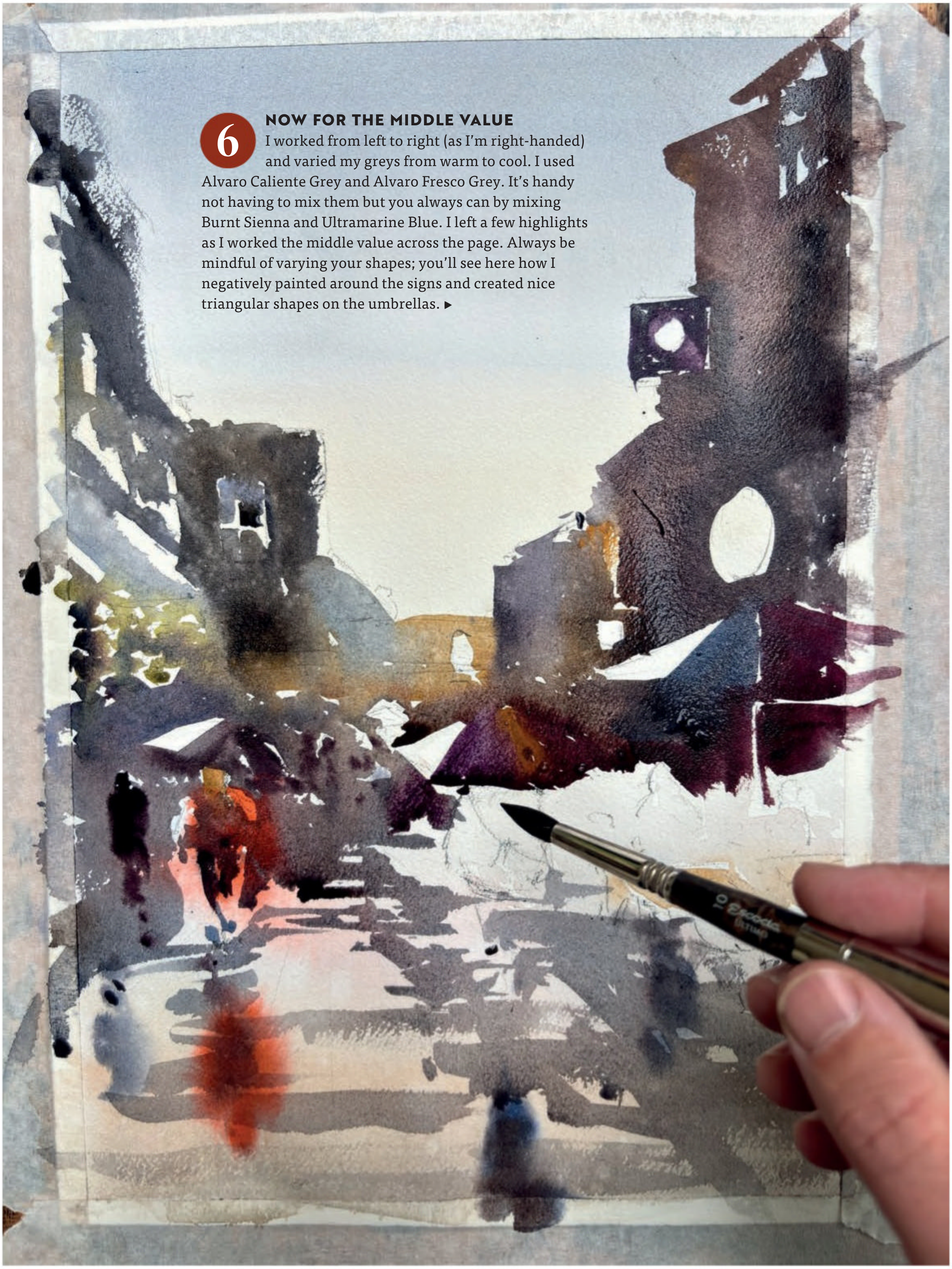
5 FIRST WASH DOWN

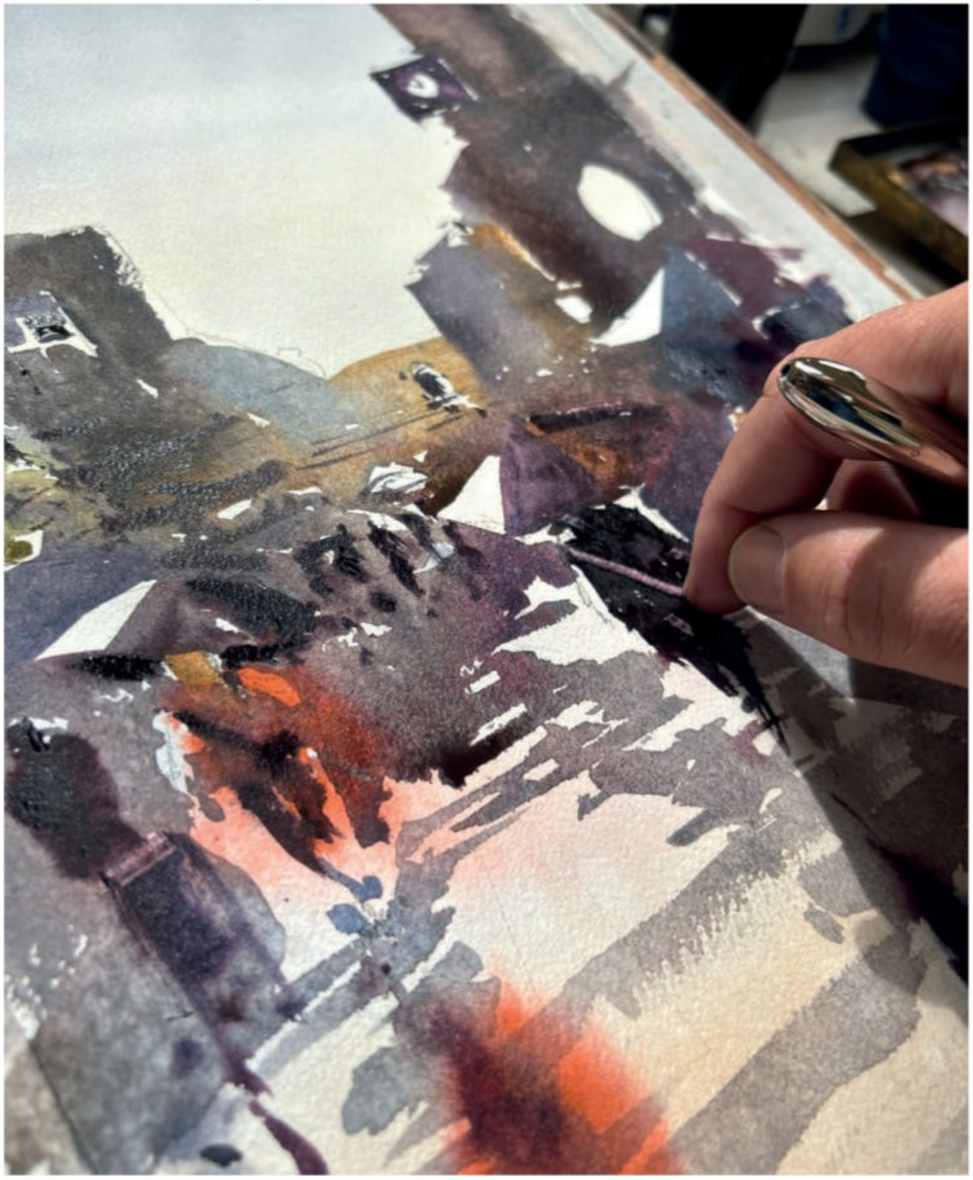
Here, you can see that I've created a graduated wash of cool grey (I added Cobalt Blue to my dirty palette) and then transitioned into a warmer Yellow Ochre. While the wash was still wet, I added in some soft edged figures and their reflections. You can clearly notice the parts that I left white. Make sure the pigment on your brush isn't too wet or it'll bloom out. You want a milky cream consistency. Then, let it dry.

6

NOW FOR THE MIDDLE VALUE

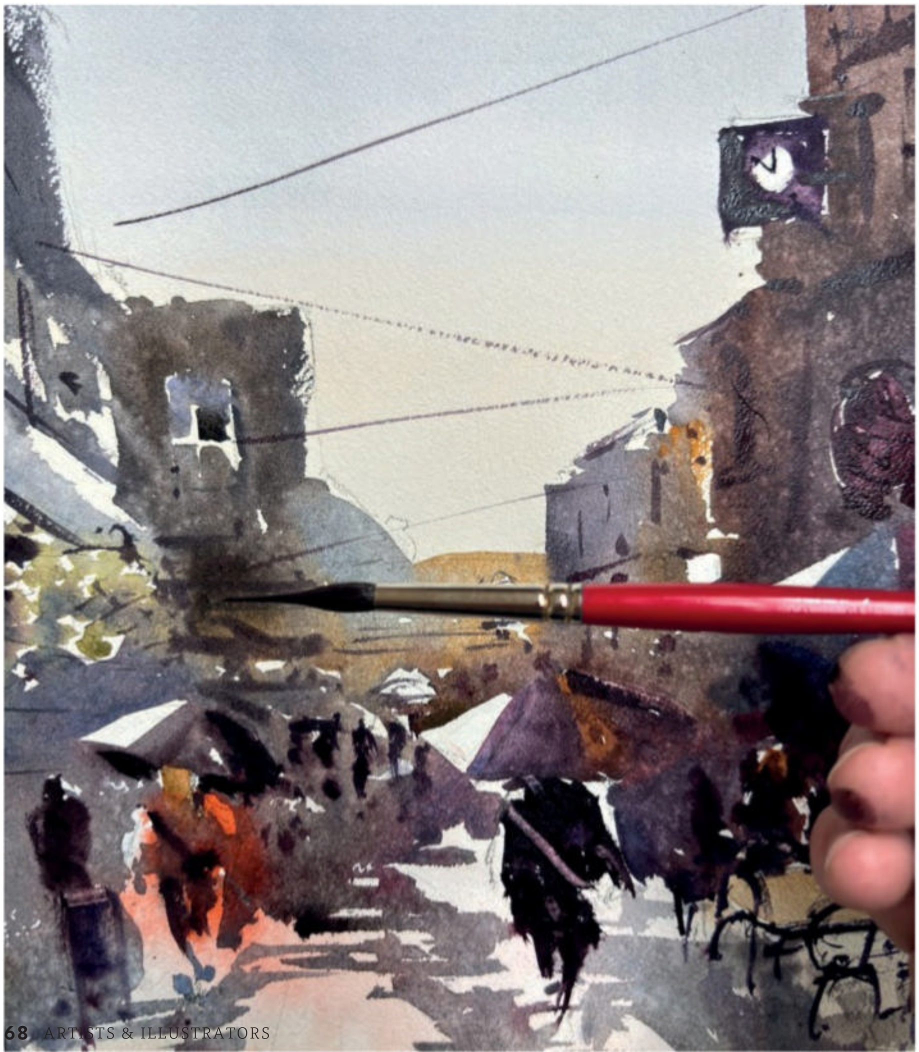
I worked from left to right (as I'm right-handed) and varied my greys from warm to cool. I used Alvaro Caliente Grey and Alvaro Fresco Grey. It's handy not having to mix them but you always can by mixing Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue. I left a few highlights as I worked the middle value across the page. Always be mindful of varying your shapes; you'll see here how I negatively painted around the signs and created nice triangular shapes on the umbrellas. ▸





7 PLAY WITH THE SHAPES BEFORE THEY DRY

Don't forget to give it a spray occasionally to make those big shapes more interesting. The best time to do this is when it's at the damp stage just before it's dry. I'm always trying to keep the middle value in all one shape and change the colour as I move across. You can see I painted a few figures in the background, wet-into-wet. I also scratched in a shoulder bag onto the foreground character. Fingernails are handy to do this but oil palette knives are useful if you have a dinner date after your painting session.

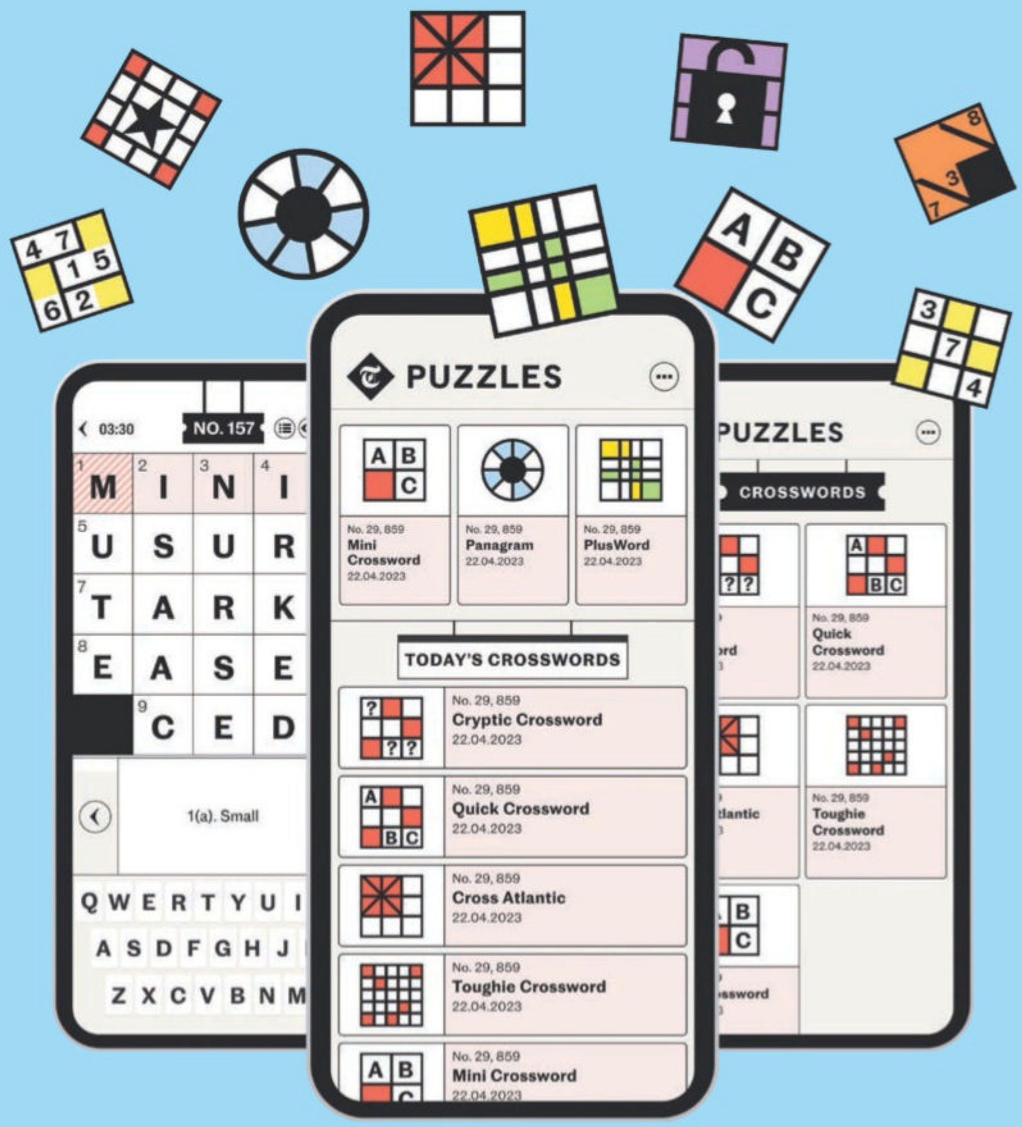


8 TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now, it's time for details. I'm using my needle point rigger for this. I'm putting in diagonal lines that resemble cables in a way that draws the viewer's eye down the page. I also put the time into the clock (to remind myself not to fiddle too much and hurry up and finish) and even used a little white gouache for a few highlights on the back of some chairs and signs. Use sparingly! ◻

PUZZLES

Enjoy 1 year for £1


PUZZLES
NO. 157
MINI
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TARK
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CED
1(a). Small
TODAY'S CROSSWORDS
CROSSWORDS
No. 29, 859
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Wise eyes

Bird artist **RACHEL ALTSCHULER** demonstrates how to paint Henry, the barn owl in oil

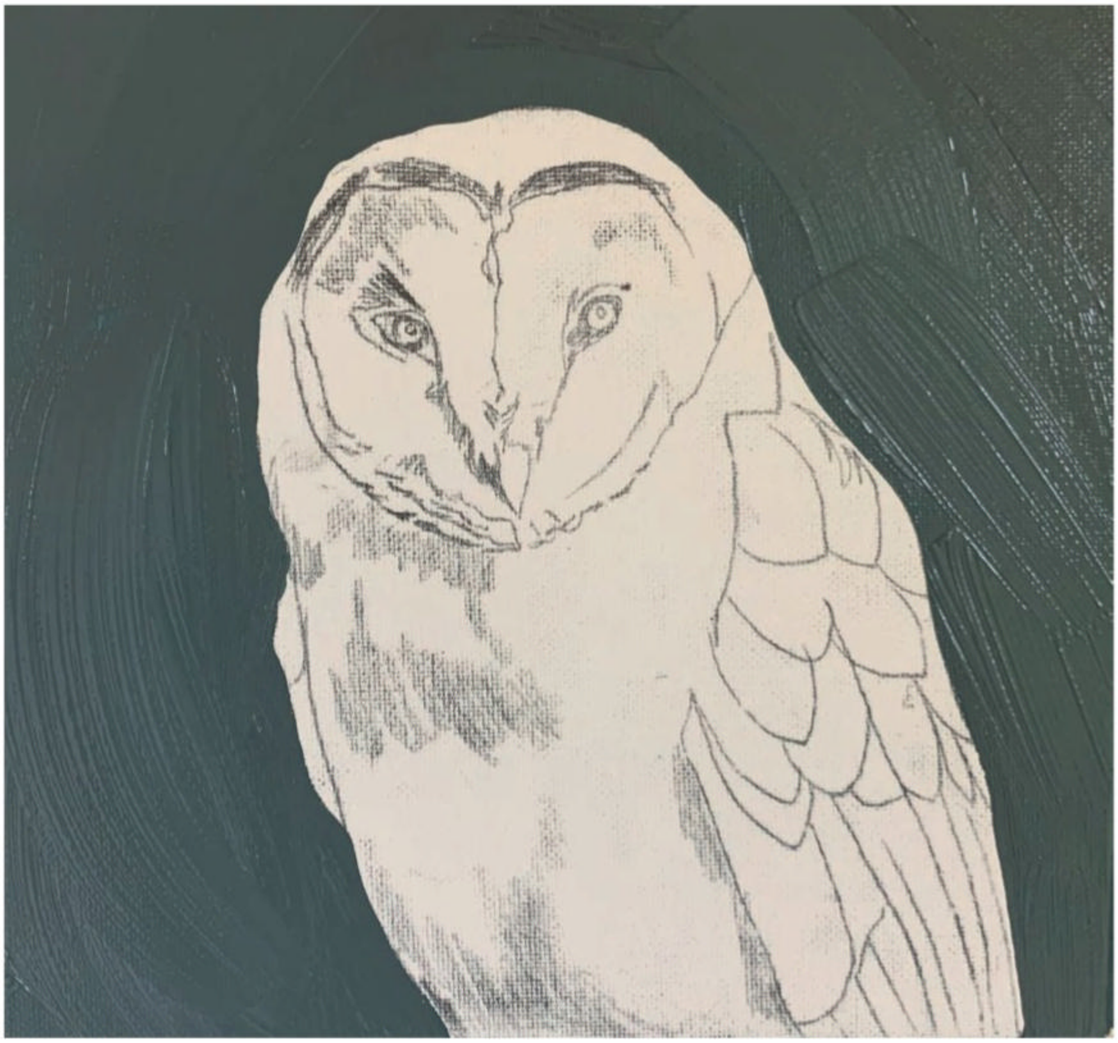
FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER I have been able to find solace in nature. It is, and continues to be, the biggest inspiration in my life and my work as an artist. I have always been fascinated by the unique energy and spirit of birds. Over the years, they have become one of my favourite subjects to paint. Every type of bird has its own set of personality traits, which I try to bring out by painting them in portrait style, and by paying special attention to detail in the eyes. Owls hold special meaning for many people, serving as a symbol of wisdom, mystery, intuition and protection. They're also a sign of good luck. Barn owls signify seeing and hearing in darkness; meaning exceptional sight, knowledge and understanding where others cannot see. I wanted to paint Henry to pay homage to these beautiful creatures, and through my art, foster a deeper connection with them. ***rachelaltschuler.com***

RACHEL'S MATERIALS

Oil Paint
Mars Black
Titanium White
Burnt Umber
Burnt Sienna
Raw Sienna
Cadmium Red
Cadmium Yellow Deep
Vermilion
Sap Green
Phthalo Blue
Kings Blue Light

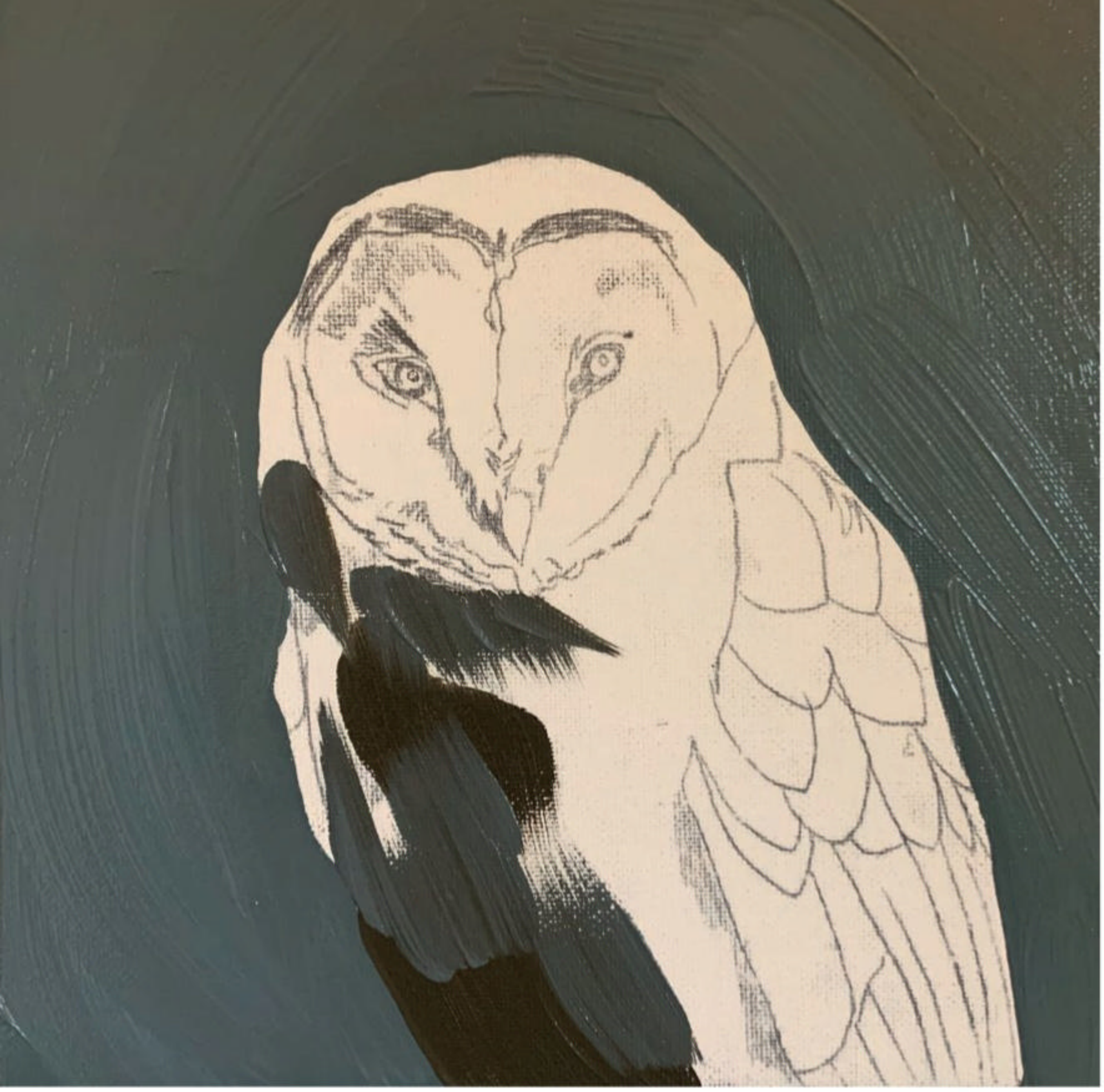
Brushes
Flat
Filbert
Round

Support
Liquin
Terpenoid/Turpentine
Palette Paper
Paper Towels
8"x8" Canvas Panel
Drawing Pencils/Erasers
Reference photo of owl



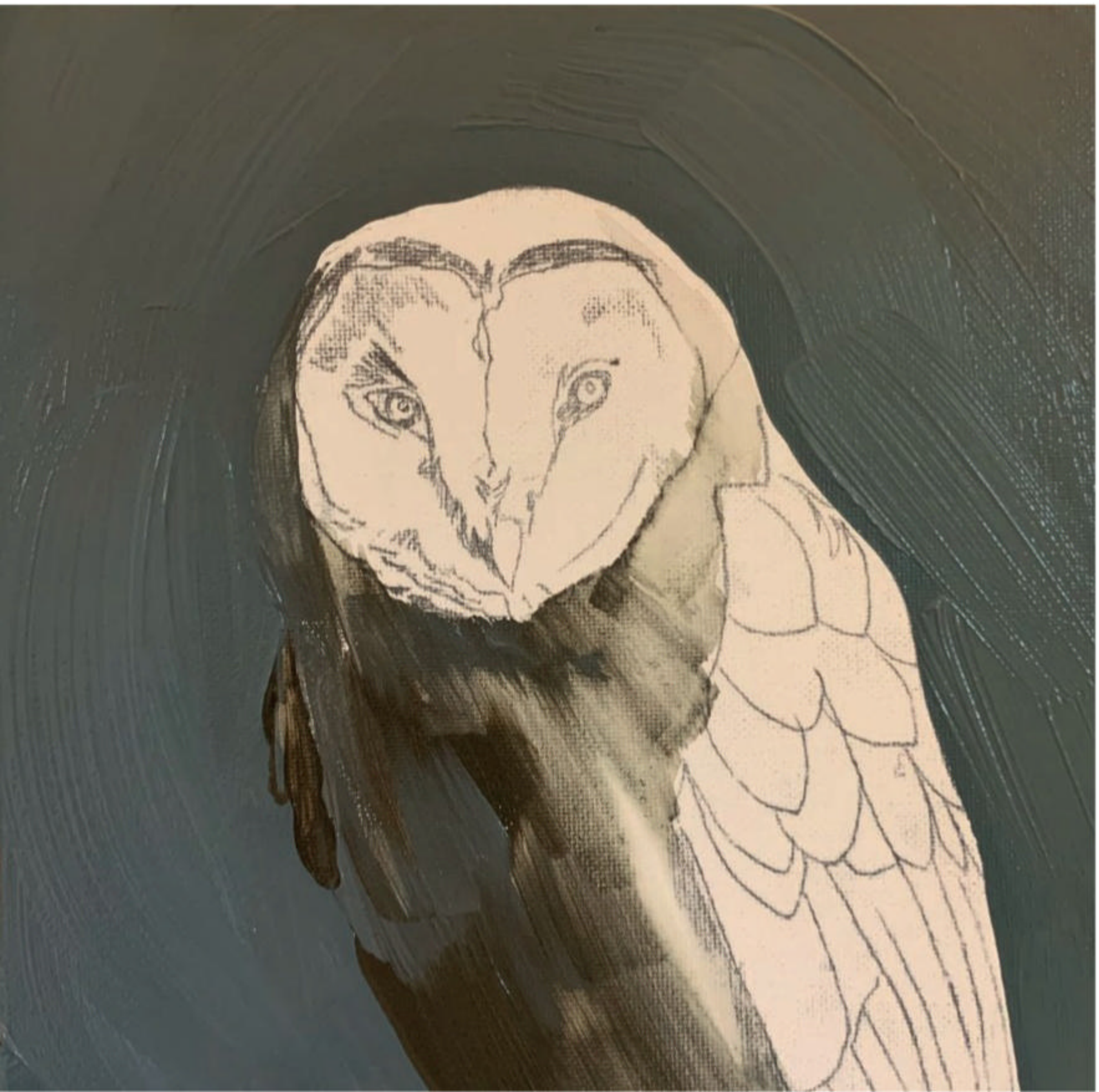
1 SKETCHING FROM REFERENCE

Begin with a reference photo, (a black and white printout for this step is best). Start sketching the owl portrait onto the canvas panel with a drawing pencil. Pay special attention to the proportions of the face, and freely erase any areas that need to be redrawn. Fill in any areas of shadow that will be helpful when laying in dark tones (see the chest area, above the eyes and below the beak). Loosely draw in feathers as shapes, not paying attention to detail yet. Once the entire image is sketched onto the canvas, start mixing the background colour on a piece of palette paper, taped down for easier access. To mix the same background colour as Henry, mix Kings Blue Light, Phthalo Blue, Sap Green, and a little bit of Mars Black until the desired colour is achieved. Once the colour is mixed, add some liquin to thin it down and begin painting the background with a flat brush. I like to paint the background in a swirling motion to add texture and movement. This step is optional.



2 DARKER TONES

Once the background is totally covered, use the leftover background paint to start laying in the dark tones in the chest area with the same flat brush. Continue to add more black to get even darker tones. Do not clean the brush yet. Make sure to use up and down, directional brush strokes to stretch the paint, and mimic the soft, feathery nature of the chest fluff.

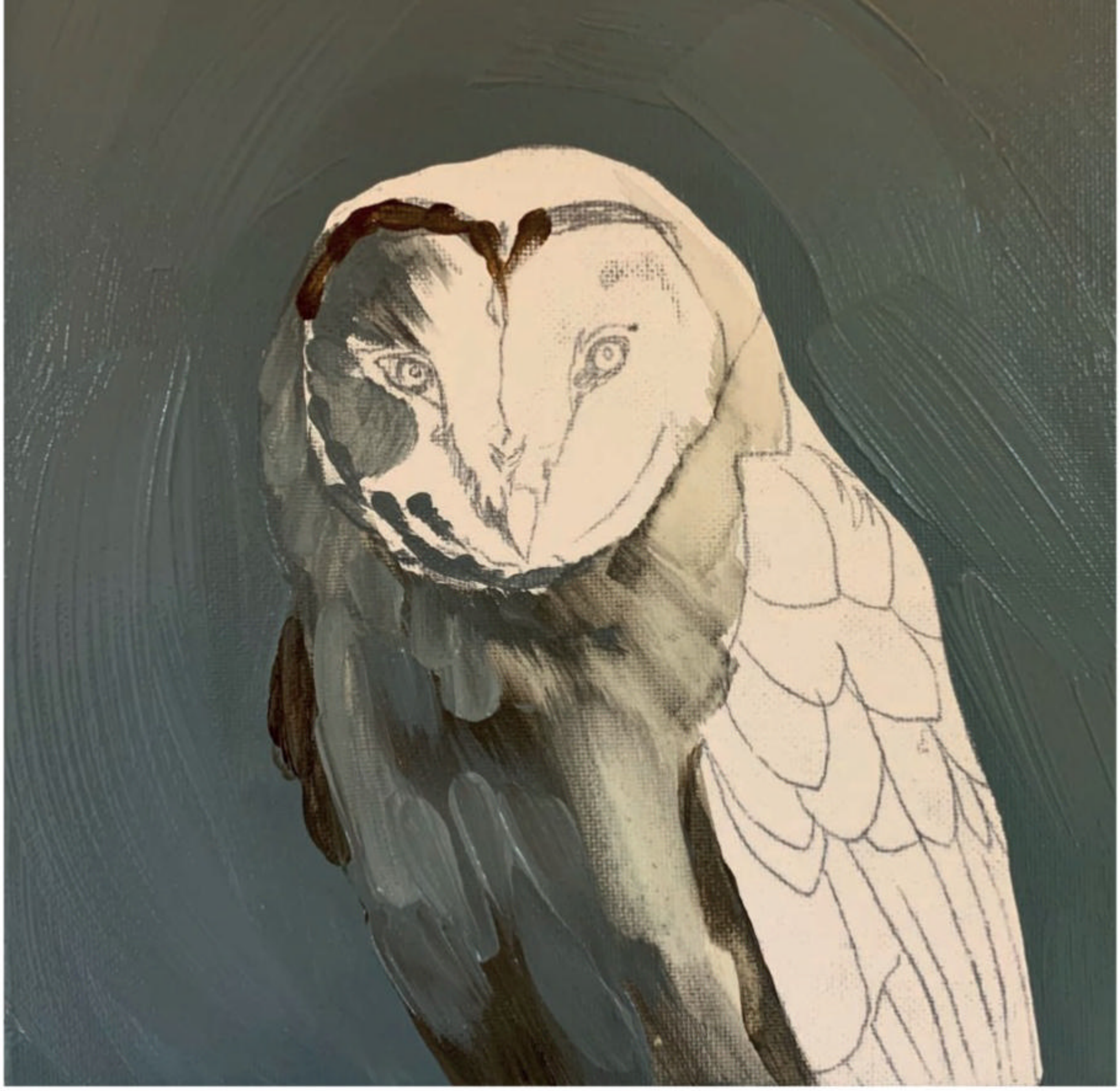


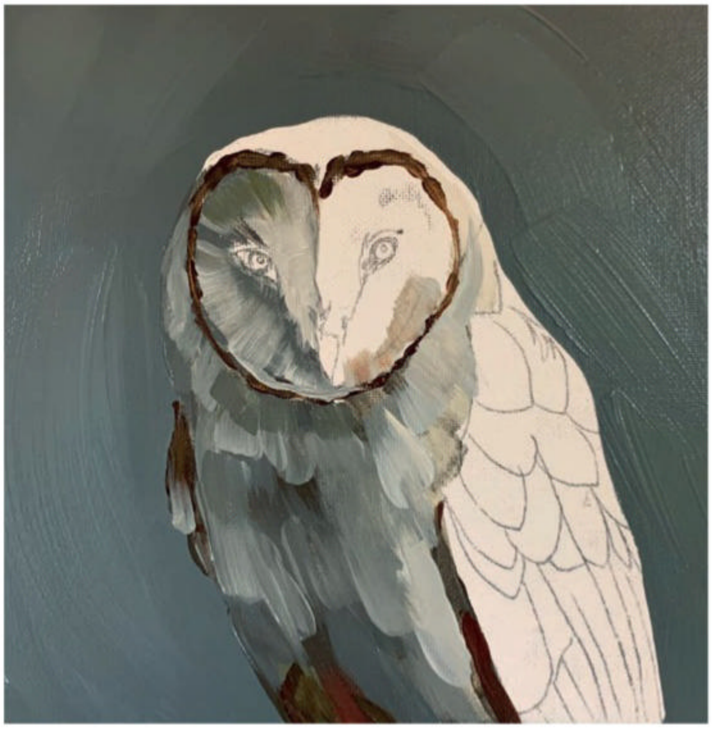
3 ADD SHADOWS

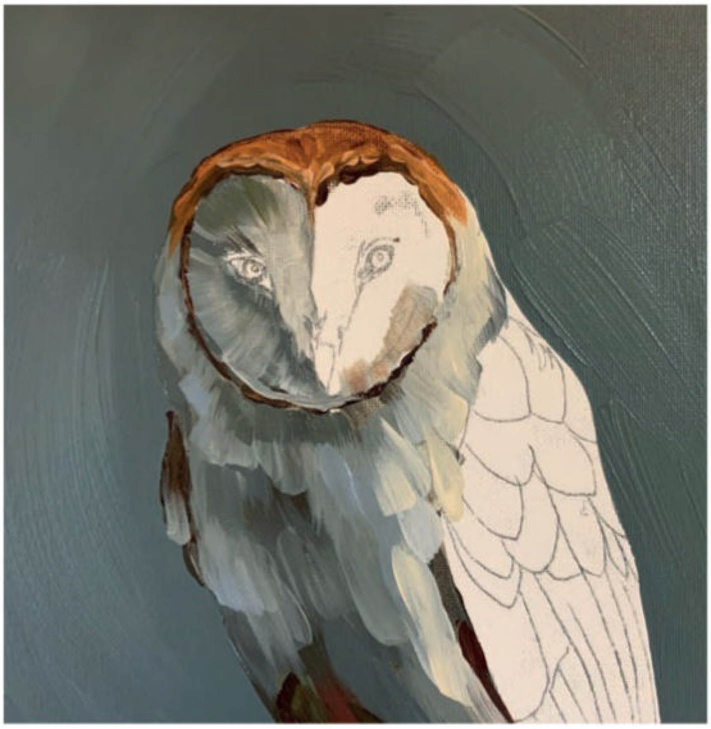
Once all of the darks are laid in on the chest area, clean the flat brush completely in turpentine and dry it off so it's wet but not dripping. Using the damp brush, begin pulling the areas of shadow downwards with directional brushstrokes once again. The thinned-down brushstrokes will begin to create depth and shadow. Continue this step until the desired look is achieved. The brush may need to be cleaned off or dried several more times throughout this step. ▶

4 THE OWL'S FACE

Once the chest is mostly filled in, begin laying the same dark colour to fill areas of shadow in the face with either a filbert brush or a smaller flat brush. Once some of the darker areas of shadow in the face have been laid in, clean or get a new filbert brush. Once the brush is clean, mix Burnt Umber with some liquin to thin it down and begin painting in the brown heart-shaped feathers that frame the face.





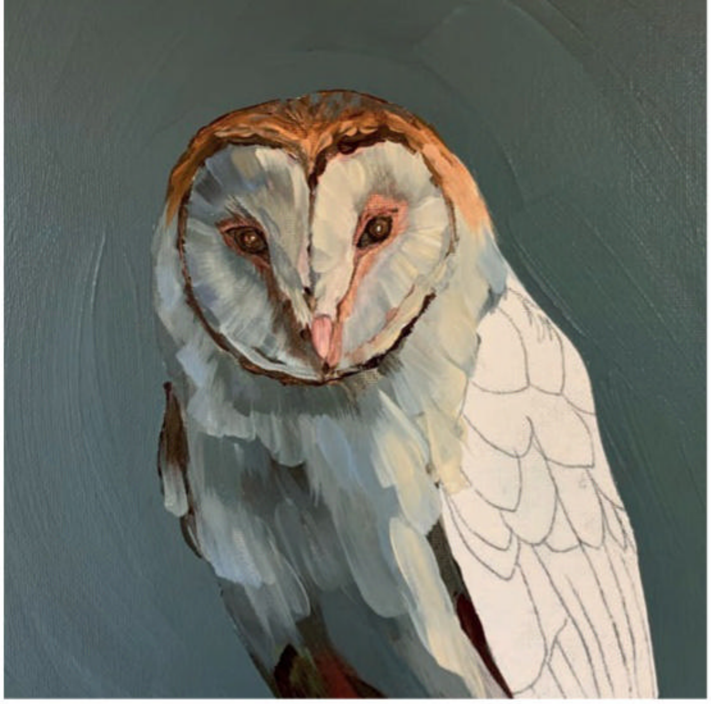


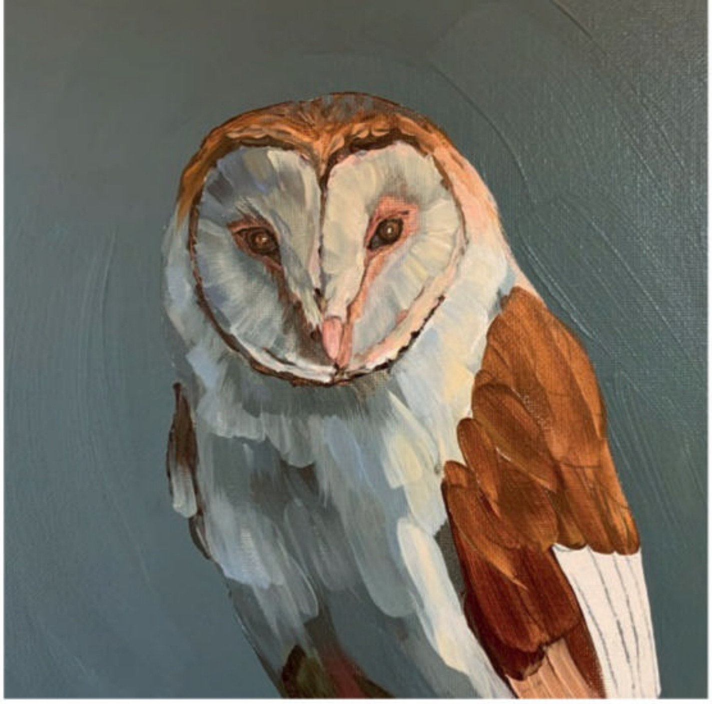
5 ADD IN THE HIGHLIGHTS

Let the chest and face area dry a little and begin mixing some lighter shadows and highlights. For this step, you will need Titanium White and Kings Blue Light. Once mixed, add some liquin to thin the paint down significantly and begin laying the blue highlight/shadow colour under the neck, around the face and the chest. Some of the light blue will naturally start to mix with other shadow colours and begin to take shape.

6 FEATHERY TEXTURES

Mix some Burnt Sienna and liquin and then, with a filbert brush, begin painting the top of the head. The liquin also helps to create that feathery texture. Fill in the entire area and add some to the bottom of the chest area. Reference the photograph to pull out any other areas you may see this warm brown colour and accent accordingly. Let the painting dry for a bit.





7

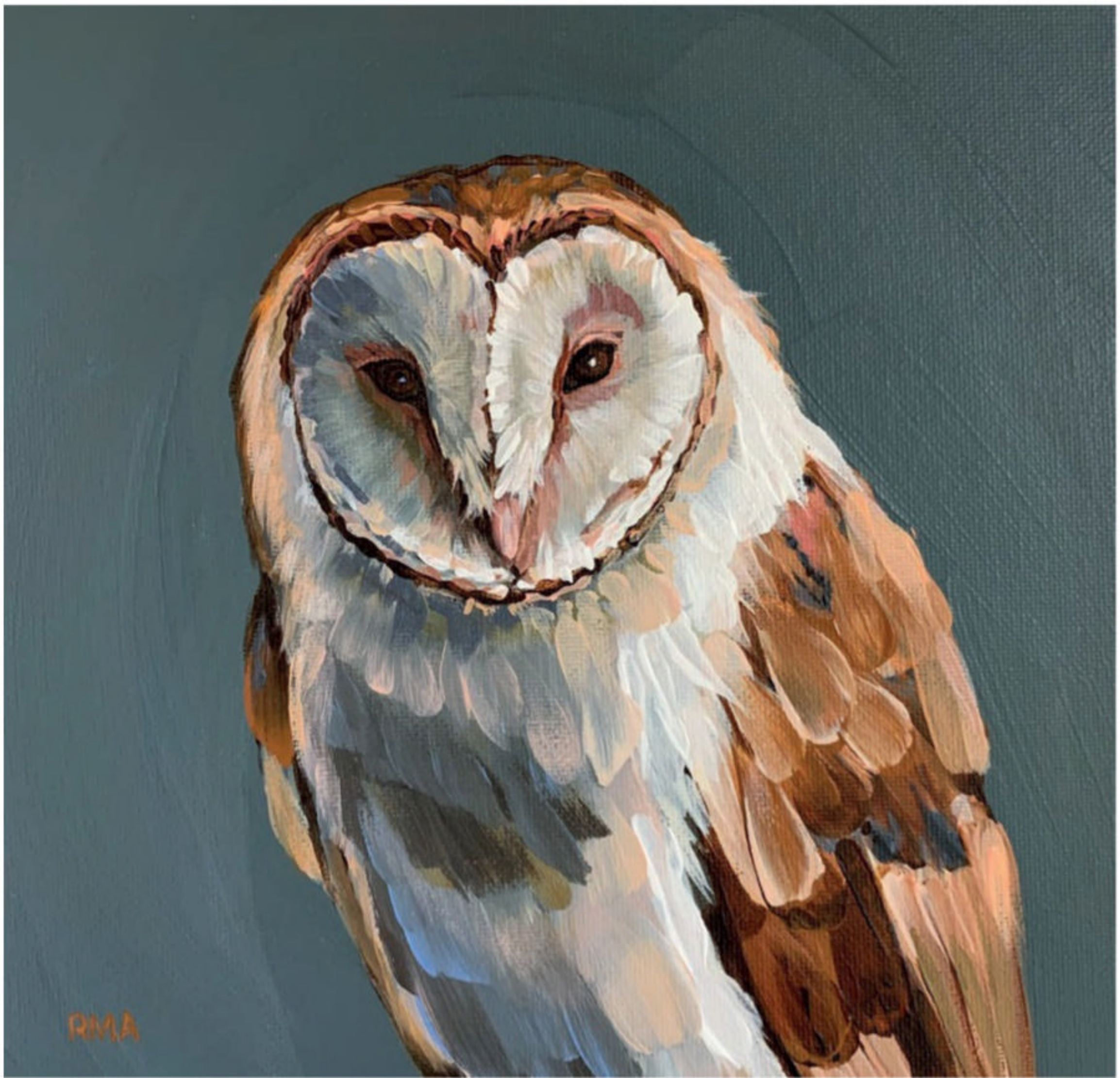
OUTLINING THE FEATURES

Once it has somewhat dried, use a small round brush to start laying in the facial features. Outline the eyes and eyelids in Mars Black and fill in the eyes with a little bit of thinned-down Burnt Sienna, leaving a white circle in the centre of each eyeball. Using the same round or filbert brush, begin laying in a combination of Burnt Sienna and Burnt Umber to accent the dark shadows around the beak and eyes. Thin the paint down enough to achieve that 'orangey glow.' For the beak and around the eyes, mix some pink (a lot of Titanium White, Cadmium Yellow, Vermilion and Cadmium Red) and Raw Sienna. With this peachy-pink colour, begin highlighting these areas. The more liquid you add, the more 'feathery' the texture becomes.

8

ADDING LARGER FEATHERS

Using a large filbert brush mixed with liquin, begin laying in the larger feathers on the shoulders and wings with large, loose brush strokes. Continue highlighting areas of the face as needed with pink and Raw Sienna, and start adding bright white highlights in areas where the light hits. Use Titanium White, a large flat brush and plenty of liquin for this step. Add more of the Kings Blue Shadow colour if needed. Let the painting dry for a bit.



9

THE FINAL STEP

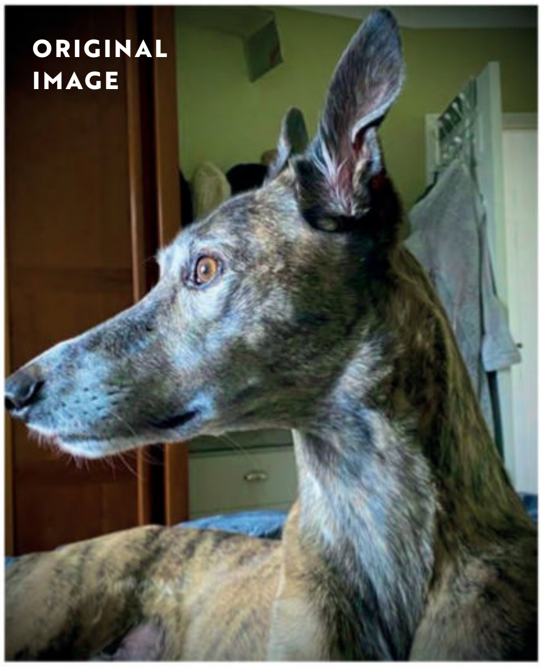
After the painting has dried, the final step is to lay in the areas of bright highlight and fluffy feathers to give the illusion of texture. Using a dry, flat brush begin highlighting the areas of the face and around the body with pink and Titanium White. The dry brush gives it a 'fluffier' texture. For the wings and shoulders, lay in the highlights the same way as in step eight. Dip a large filbert brush in some pink paint with a lot of liquin and begin laying in each feather. The bigger the filbert brush for this step, the easier it is. The final step is to take a tiny round brush dipped in white paint and fill in each white dot that was left on each eyeball to create the illusion of a reflection. ☐

Dog days

To remember an animal she was fond of, direct painter **LISA PUHLHOFER** painted him in oil, building up the painting almost like a patchwork quilt

It was the American painter and teacher Robert Henri who said, "Paint what you feel. Paint what you see. Paint what is real to you." So, for this article I chose the proud, gentle and graceful Lurcher-Saluki cross called Mo.I walked with him and his owner regularly and have always enjoyed sketching and painting him. Sadly, he died a year ago but he's still very real to me. I thought painting him, based on this photograph of him which shows different colours reflected in his fur, would be a fitting tribute.

lisaannpuhlhofer.net ▸



THANK YOU TO ANNE PROSSER FOR THE REFERENCE PHOTO

LISA'S MATERIALS

Paint

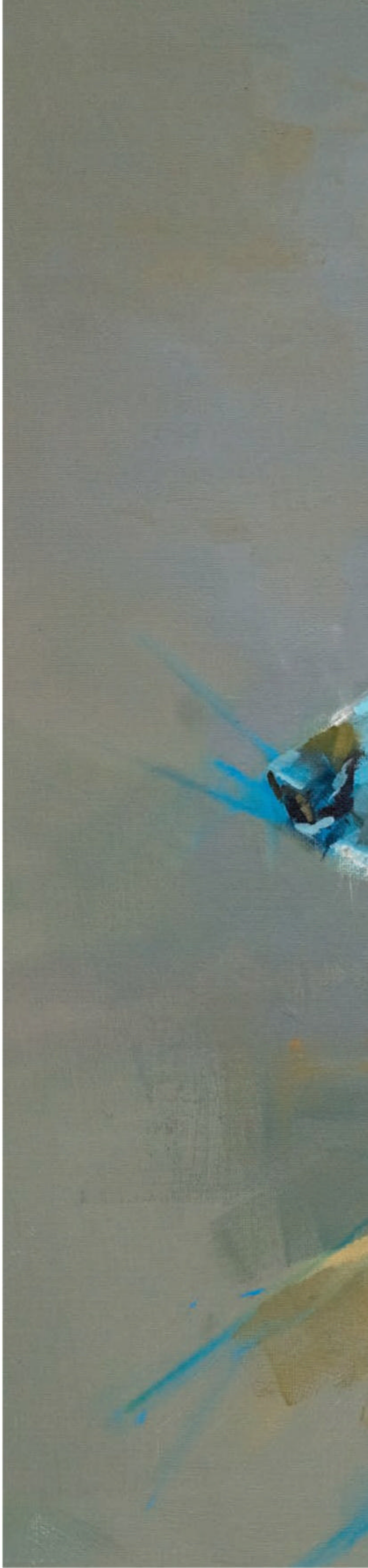
Winsor & Newton: Titanium White, Lemon Yellow and Artists Yellow Ochre
Michael Harding: Brilliant Pink, Ultramarine Blue, Phthalocyanine Blue, Phthalo Blue, Titanium White
C. Robersons & Co: Alizarin Crimson
Winsor & Newton Galeria acrylic gesso: White
Holbein acrylic gesso: Grey

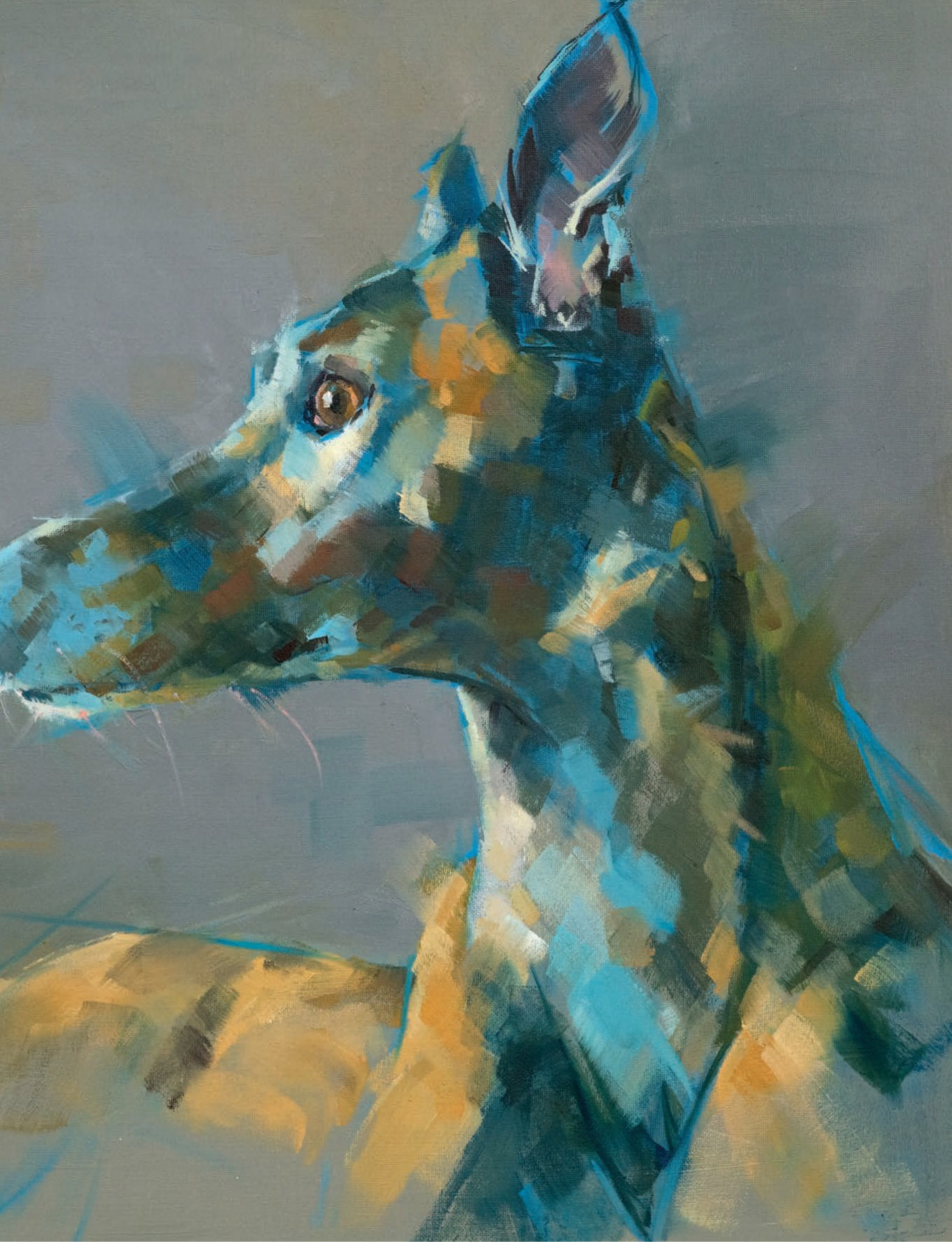
Brushes

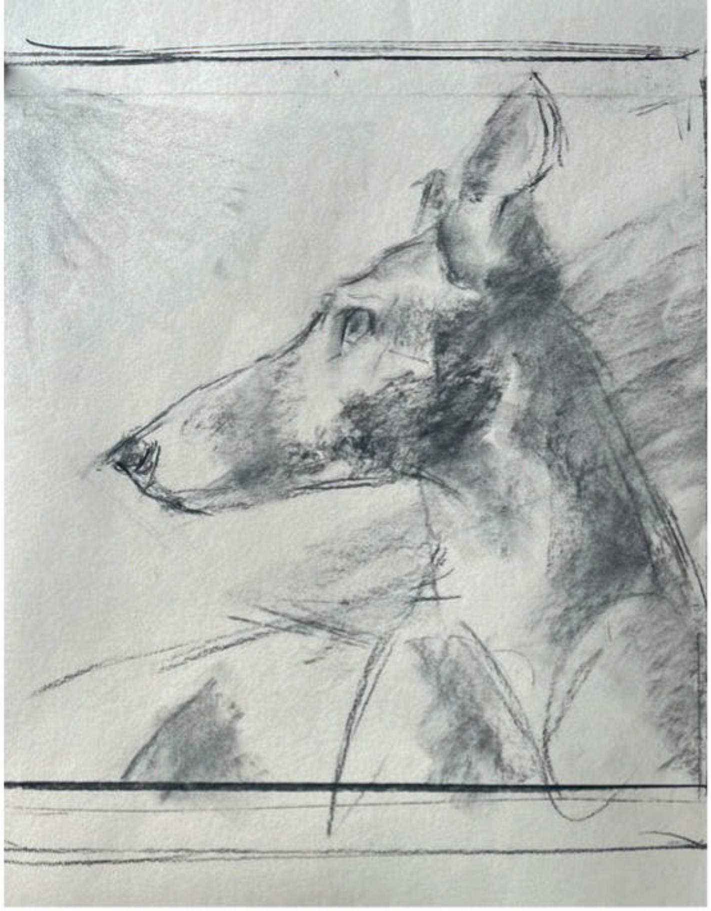
Rosemary & Co: Ivory long flat hog brushes size 8 and 10, Evergreen short flat brushes size 0, 4mm flat acrylic brush

Support

40x40cm Belle Art MDF Fine Cotton Canvas Panel
Palette knife
Catalyst wedge
Harris paint guard Mahl stick
Kremer Shellsol T odourless thinner Linseed oil

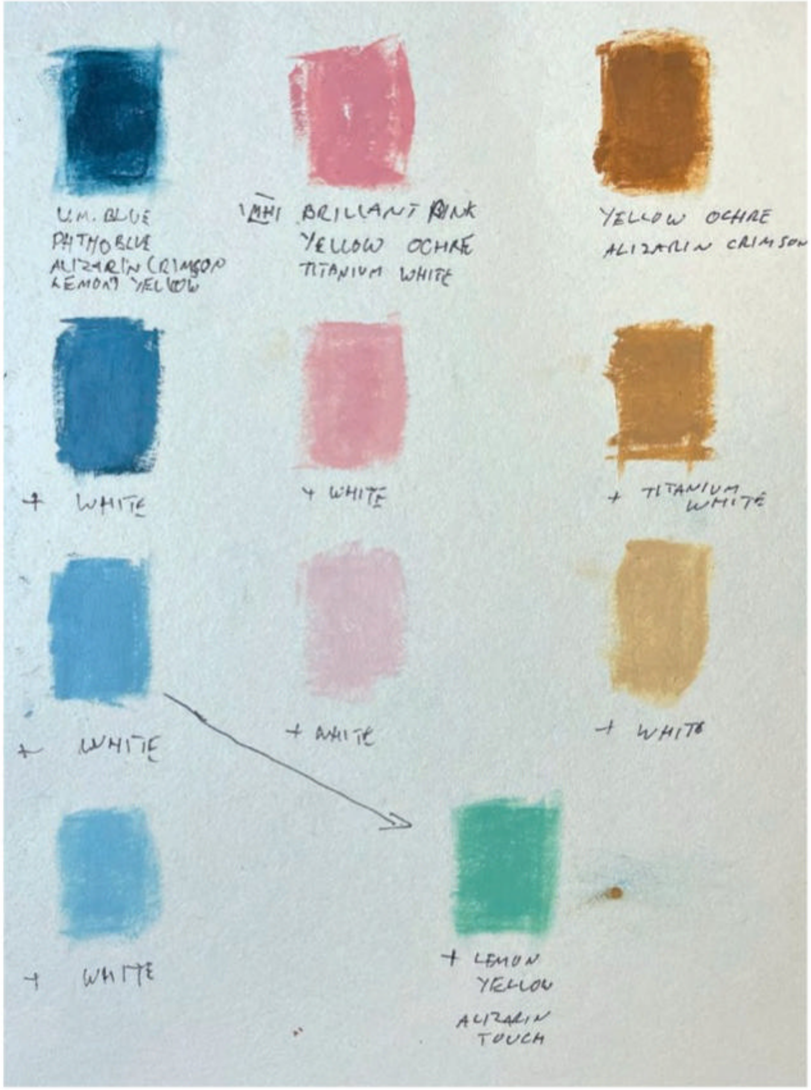






1 SKETCH IT OUT

I started with some quick sketches to familiarise myself with the subject and to decide on the proportions for the canvas and composition. Capturing the character of the subject is always as important to me as is the likeness. The composition and proportions of the support helps to achieve this. I settled on this square composition which can be a challenge but felt it worked well with the shape of the profile view. Mo was a large animal, so I decided to have him fill as much of the panel as possible to give a sense of his size and majestic nature. I intentionally left space to the left of his head to give the impression of him staring into the distance.

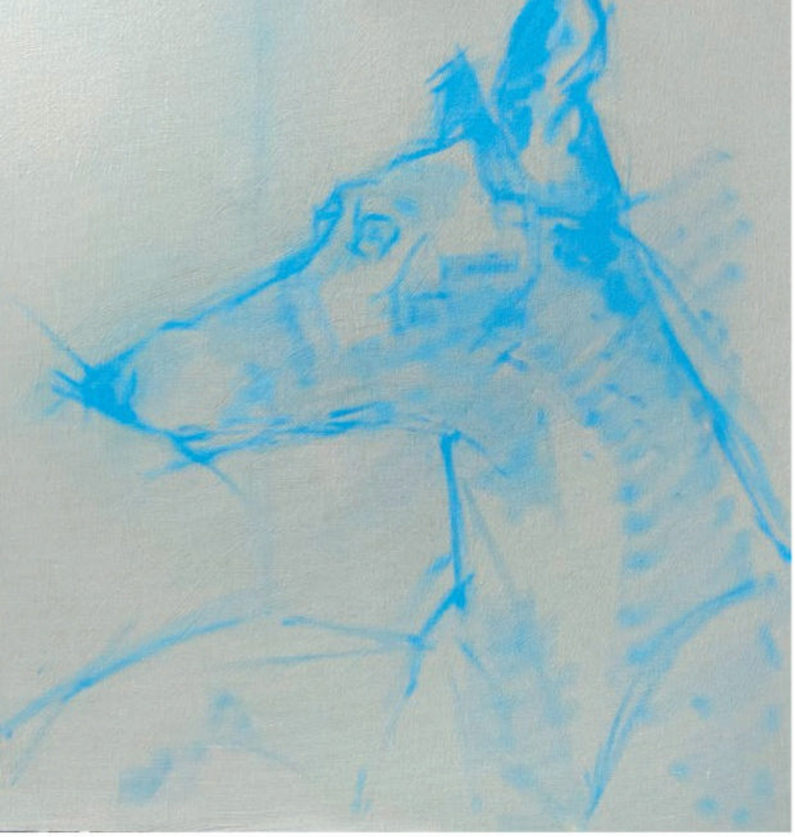

U.M. BLUE
PHTHO BLUE
ALIZARIN CRIMSON
LEMON YELLOW
~~WHI~~ BRILLANT PINK
YELLOW OCHRE
TITANIUM WHITE
YELLOW OCHRE
ALIZARIN CRIMSON
+ WHITE
+ WHITE
+ TITANIUM WHITE
+ WHITE
+ WHITE
+ WHITE
+ WHITE
+ LEMON YELLOW
ALIZARIN TOUCH

2 DECIDE ON A COLOUR PALETTE

When working on a project I generally like to work out a basic colour palette on paper first but will adapt it as I work if I feel the painting needs it. Finding what works is an intuitional process for me and honestly, always a bit of trial and error. I chose the dominant warm Yellow Ochre colour of his fur and then added two main accent colours that I could see in the subject. In this case, I based these choices loosely on a triadic colour scheme.

3 MIX IT UP

Once I'm happy with my palette, I then mixed my three main colours starting with the darkest tones. I use a glass palette so that I can change the colour under the palette according to the ground colour I'm working on. This helps me see the colours as I mix them, as they will appear on the canvas. I then prepared the support. I mixed white and grey gesso to get a mid-to-light warm grey tone. A mid-toned ground helps me to accurately evaluate both tone and colour as I work. I will often leave areas of the ground visible in the finished piece and felt the neutral nature of grey would work well with my chosen colour palette.



4

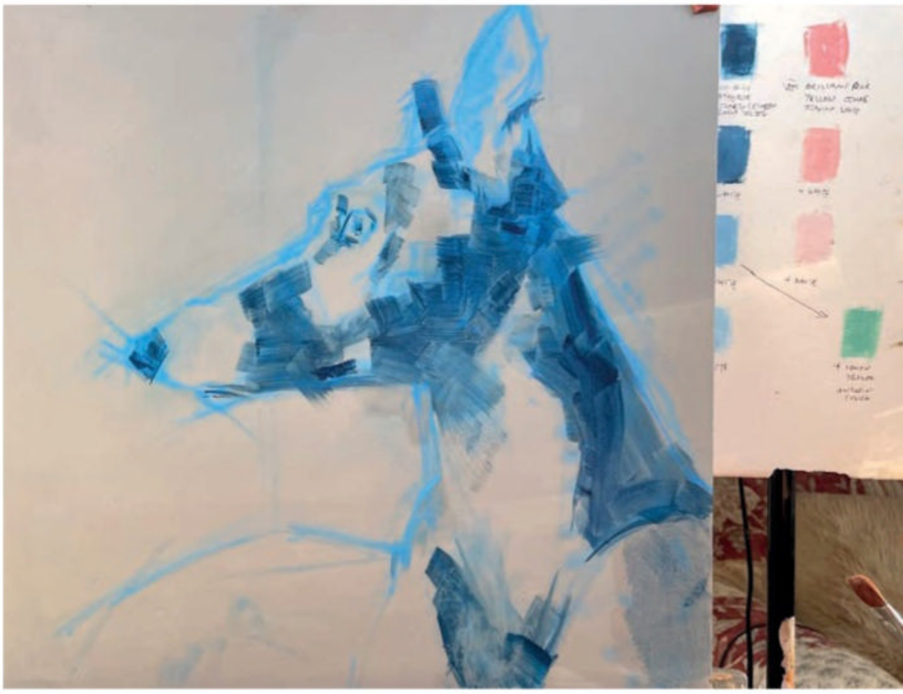
THE GENERAL PROPORTIONS

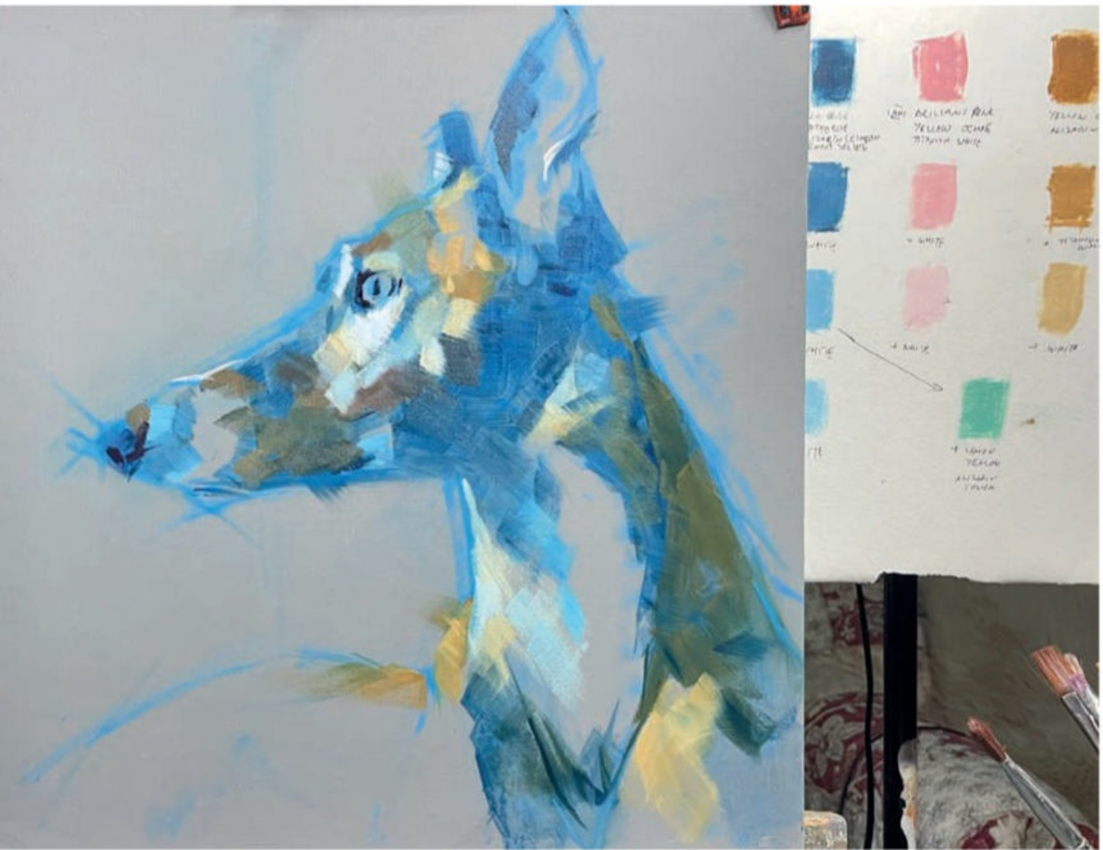
Next, I loosely drew out the subject using one of the stronger accent colours, in this case Phthalo Blue mixed with Titanium White. This colour is important to me as, like the ground, I will leave some of these drawn marks visible in the finished painting and may even draw back into it at times using the same colour. This adds a lively feeling and continuity to the finished work. Where necessary, I used a straight edge, such as my Mahl Stick, to map out the angles before going in with the curves. Our brain tends to overdo curves, so this keeps the drawing in check. I concentrated on general proportions and not the fine detail at this stage. I will refine the accuracy later as I add the shapes of tone.

5

BLOCK IN

Using transparent colours, I blocked in the darks with a thin mix of paint and thinner using a large flat hog brush. I always attempt to do as much of the initial blocking in without the addition of white to prevent things becoming muddy. I started with a mix of Phthalo Blue with a touch of Alizarin Crimson and Lemon Yellow. I always mix my own black so that I can search for nuanced changes in colour and temperature in the darks. I then vary my paint mix proportions accordingly, which adds interest and depth to the shadows.

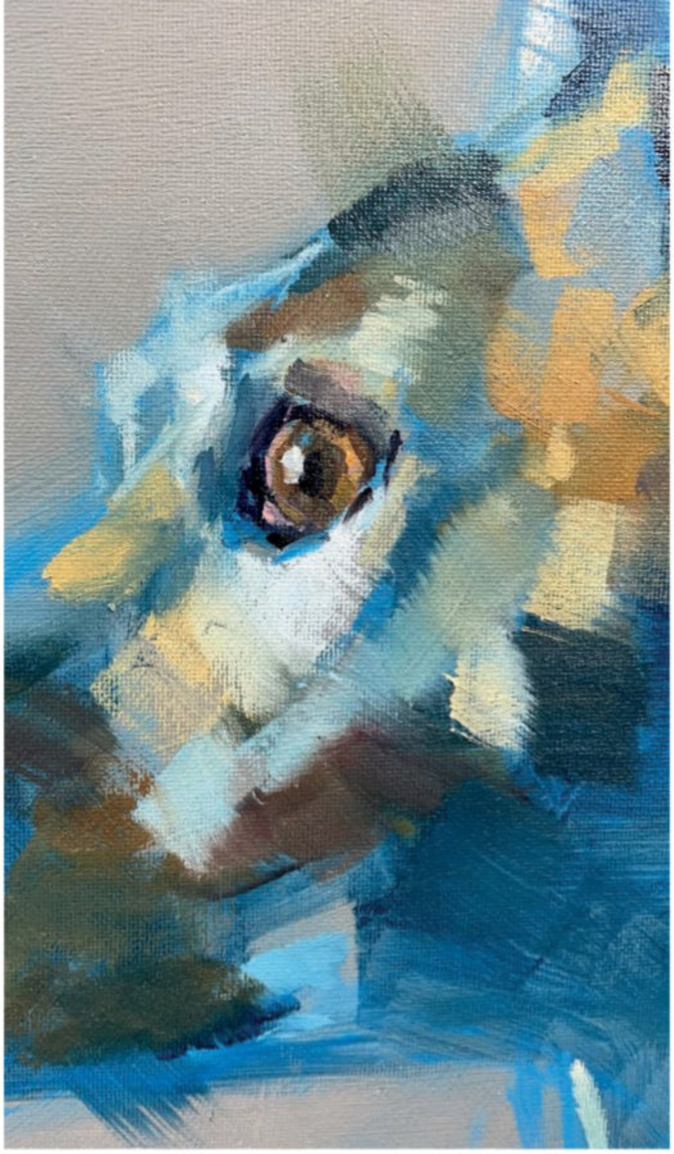




6

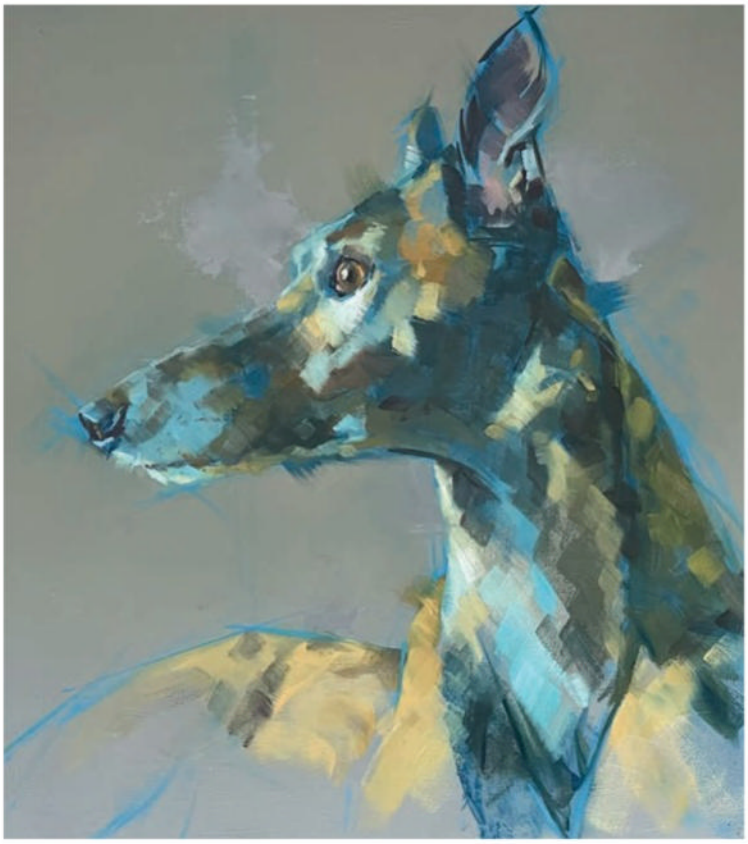
EXPERIMENT WITH COLOUR

Once I had the darks roughly mapped out, I then started to add colour, working between lights and darks, warm and cool. I attempt to keep one brush for cools and one for warms but, once I'm absorbed into the painting process, this often goes array. I clean my brushes regularly by just wiping with a clean rag. I am a direct painter which means I put a mark down and if I'm happy I leave it, building up the painting a bit like a patchwork quilt, adding half tones as I go. Again, I vary the temperature where I see changes. I'm always experimenting and searching for pleasing colour and temperature relationships. If something doesn't work, then I simply remove it with a little thinner rather than blending on the surface. I try to work all over the painting using the colour I have in my brush wherever I see it. I find this helps to unify the painting. ▶



7 THE DETAILS

I continue to build up the painting in this way including the smaller detailed features of the head. In this photo, you can see how I built up the eye, still using the direct painting method and a small 4mm flat acrylic brush. I find acrylic brushes give me a sharper edge than a hog for these smaller details.

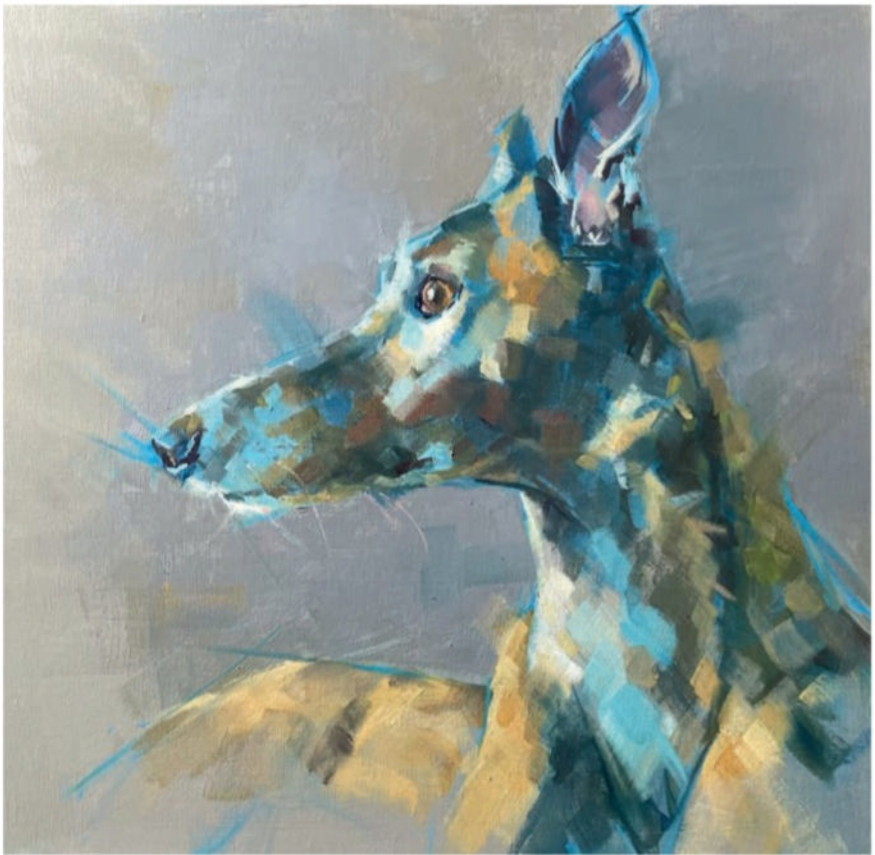


8 DON'T BE AFRAID TO DISRUPT

Once the main areas of underpainting are complete, I continued to build up the layers, including the background. I am searching all the time for areas of lost and found edges. These create a more naturalistic, three-dimensional look to the subject. A lost edge will recede and a found edge will come forward. This is very useful when attempting to convey the roundness of the head. I added the background using a palette knife and large brush, pushing it over the edges of the subject in places to disrupt it. I find this adds a lively, more immediate feeling to the painting and conveys sense of movement, but don't overdo it.

9 COME BACK WITH A FRESH PAIR OF EYES

Once I start to feel I'm nearly there with a project, I will put it away for a while. This means that I can come back to it with a fresh eye, see any mistakes and areas that need refining. On my return, I reinstated some of the original drawing marks that had been lost and added some that I felt would enhance the finished piece. I built up the mid and light tones, refining a few areas as I worked between the subject and the background. The final stage was to add the lightest highlights, including suggesting a few whiskers with a rigger. One of the most common questions I'm asked is, "How do you know when to stop?" This is difficult and for me, instinctive. I don't always get it right, but it's when I feel I have said all I want to say about the subject and nothing is jarring to my eye. ◻



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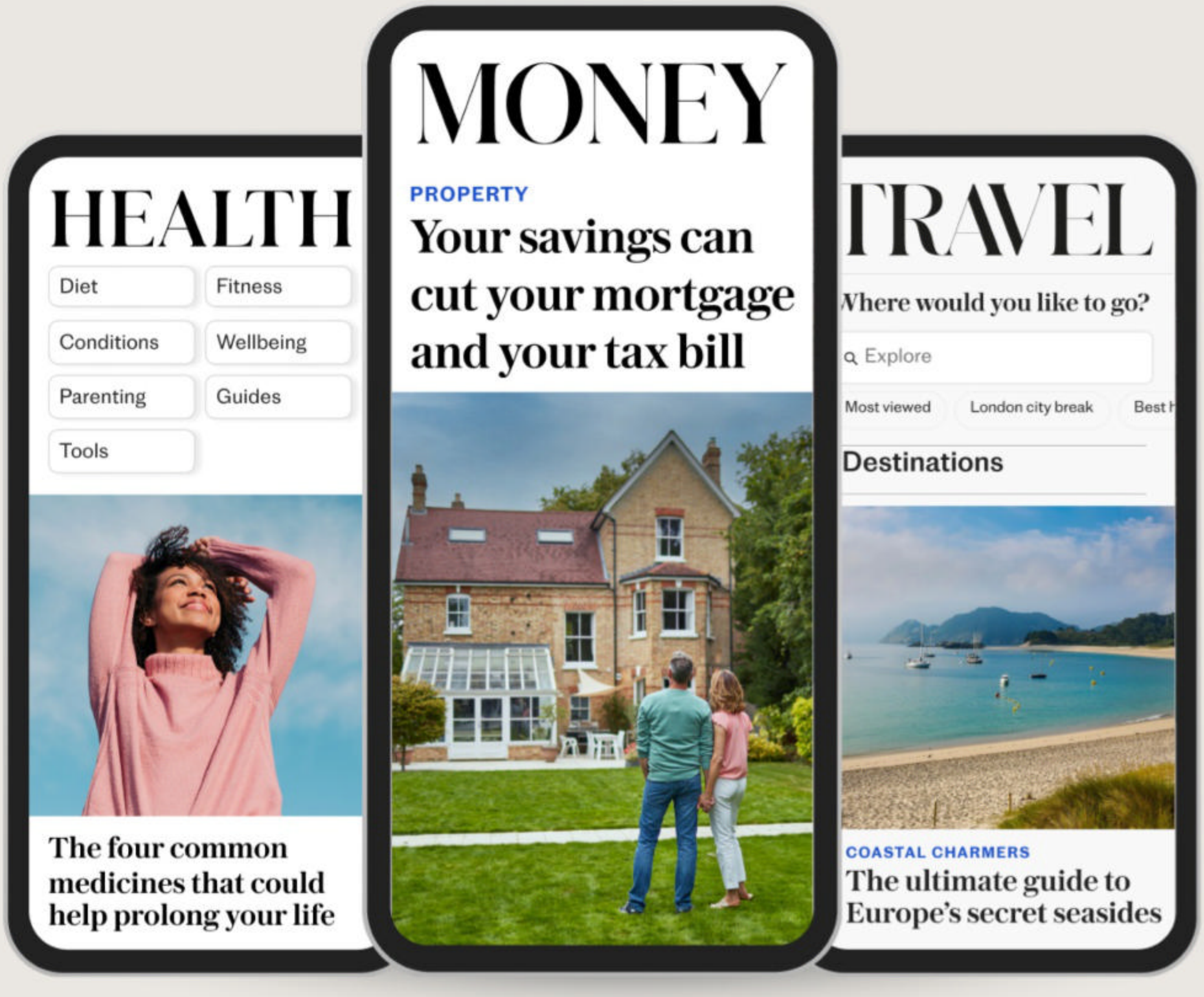
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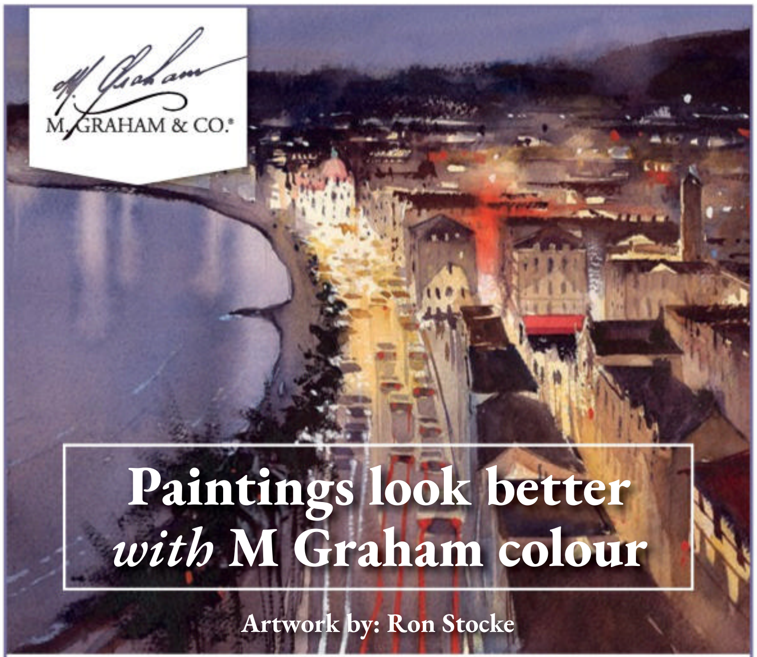

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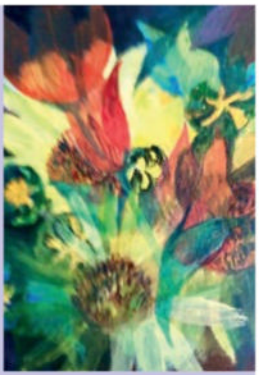

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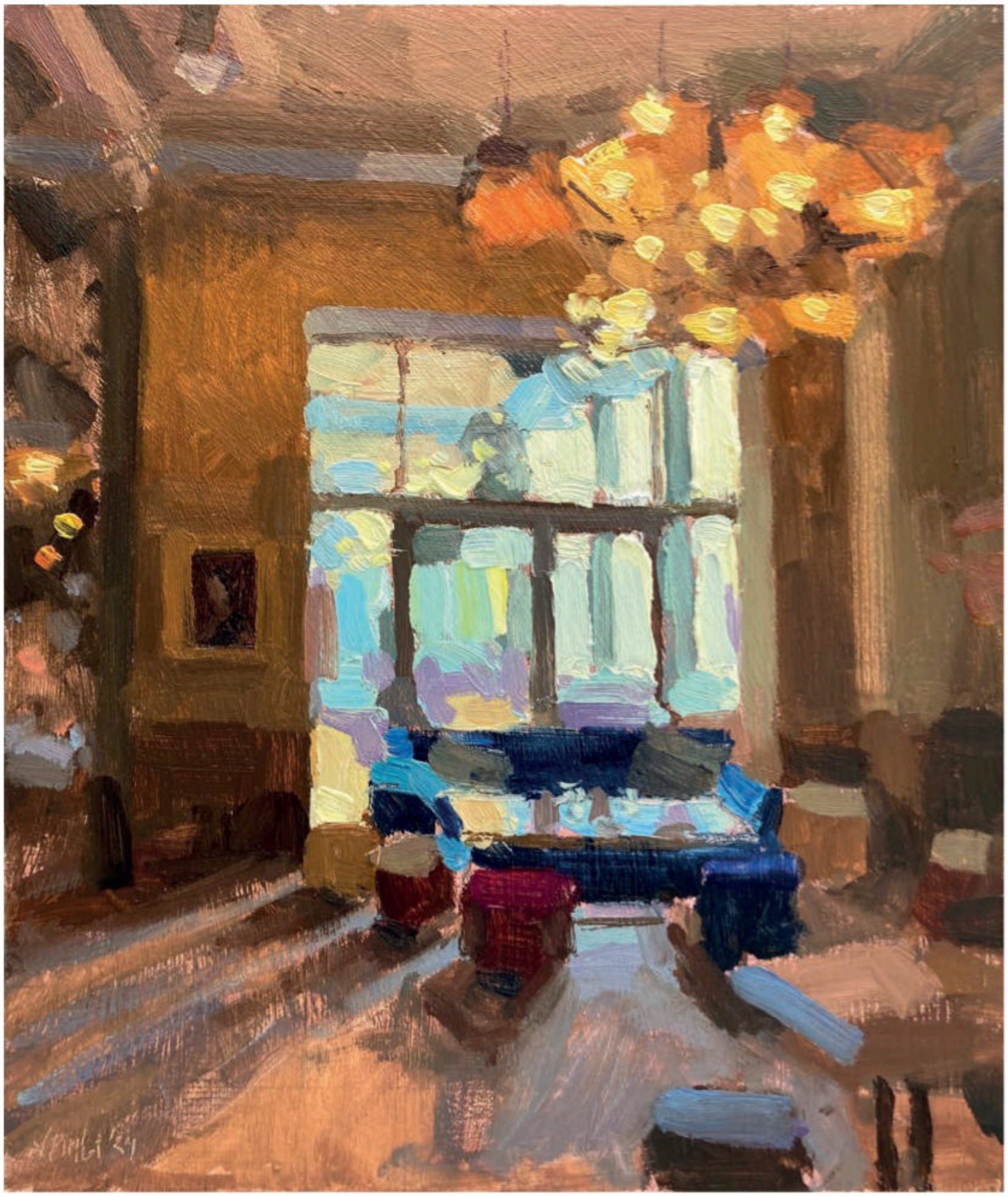

Windows at Cosy Club, oil on board, 25.4x30.4cm

Picture this

Every month, we ask an artist to tell us about a painting that means a lot to them. This month, we speak to Bath-based Belgian oil artist **VALÉRIE PIRLOT**

This painting is inspired by the Cosy Club in Bath. That day, when I walked in, I was struck by the beauty of this scene; a striking contrast between the warm tones of the interior and the cool tones of the light coming through the window.

The large window, painted with bold brushstrokes and patches of colour, reminded me of church window mosaics. So, it conveys a sense of hope and the feeling that something grand and beautiful outside might be waiting for you.

Light is at the centre of my work and remains an endless fascination. Pushing the limits to abstraction is a way of involving the viewer in the process. Not including every detail means the viewer can fill in the gaps and add their own story and emotions to the painting, hopefully elevating it to a whole new meaning.

Life goes fast, and we are only catching glimpses of it. This is what I try to depict with paint: an emotion, an impression, a moment and a feeling of light that will be gone.

The festive season is often about meeting up with friends and family, stopping for a hot chocolate during your Christmas shopping, sheltering from the cold weather, slowing down and enjoying a good book on the sofa, and celebrating before a new year starts again. To me, this painting evokes all of this.

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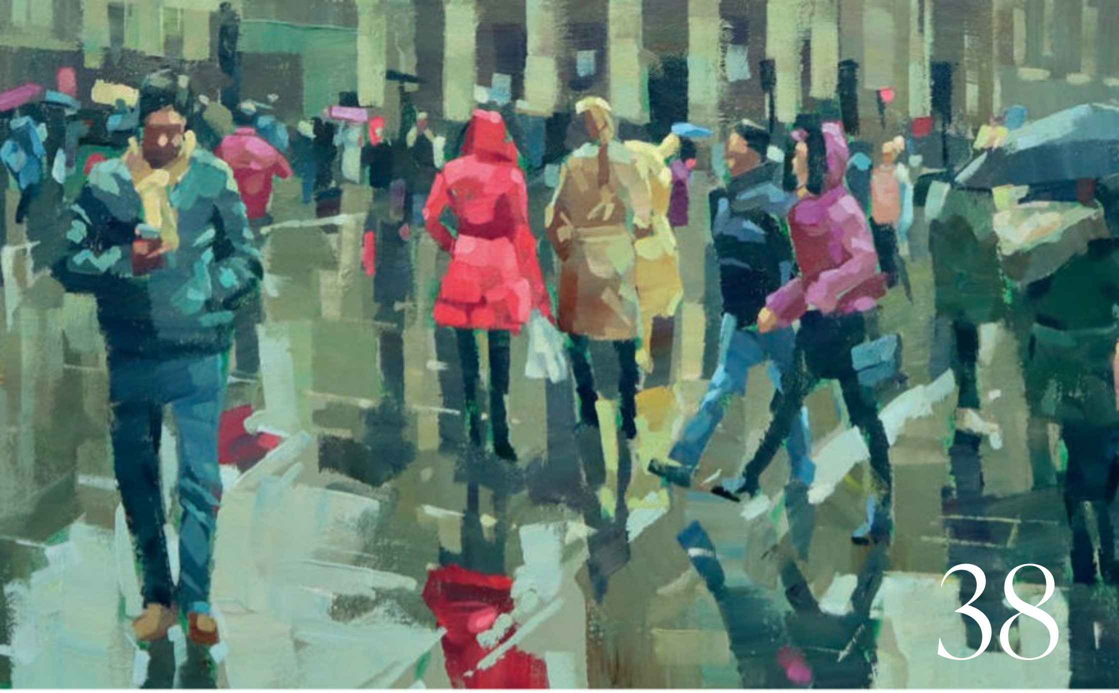

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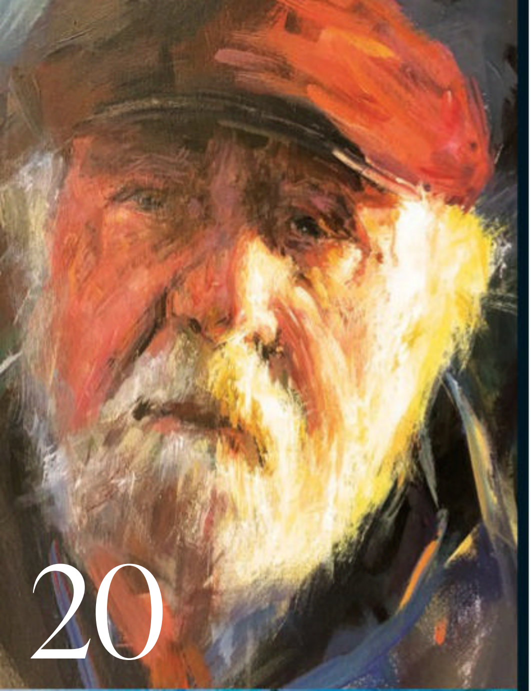
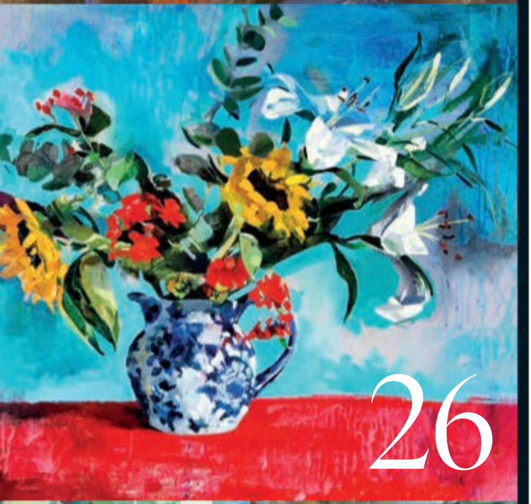
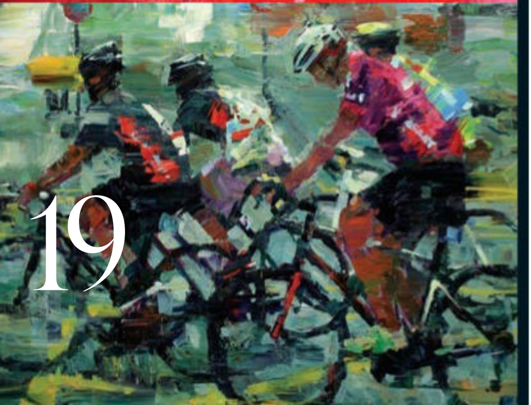






Aimed at all painters, from the beginner to the more seasoned...

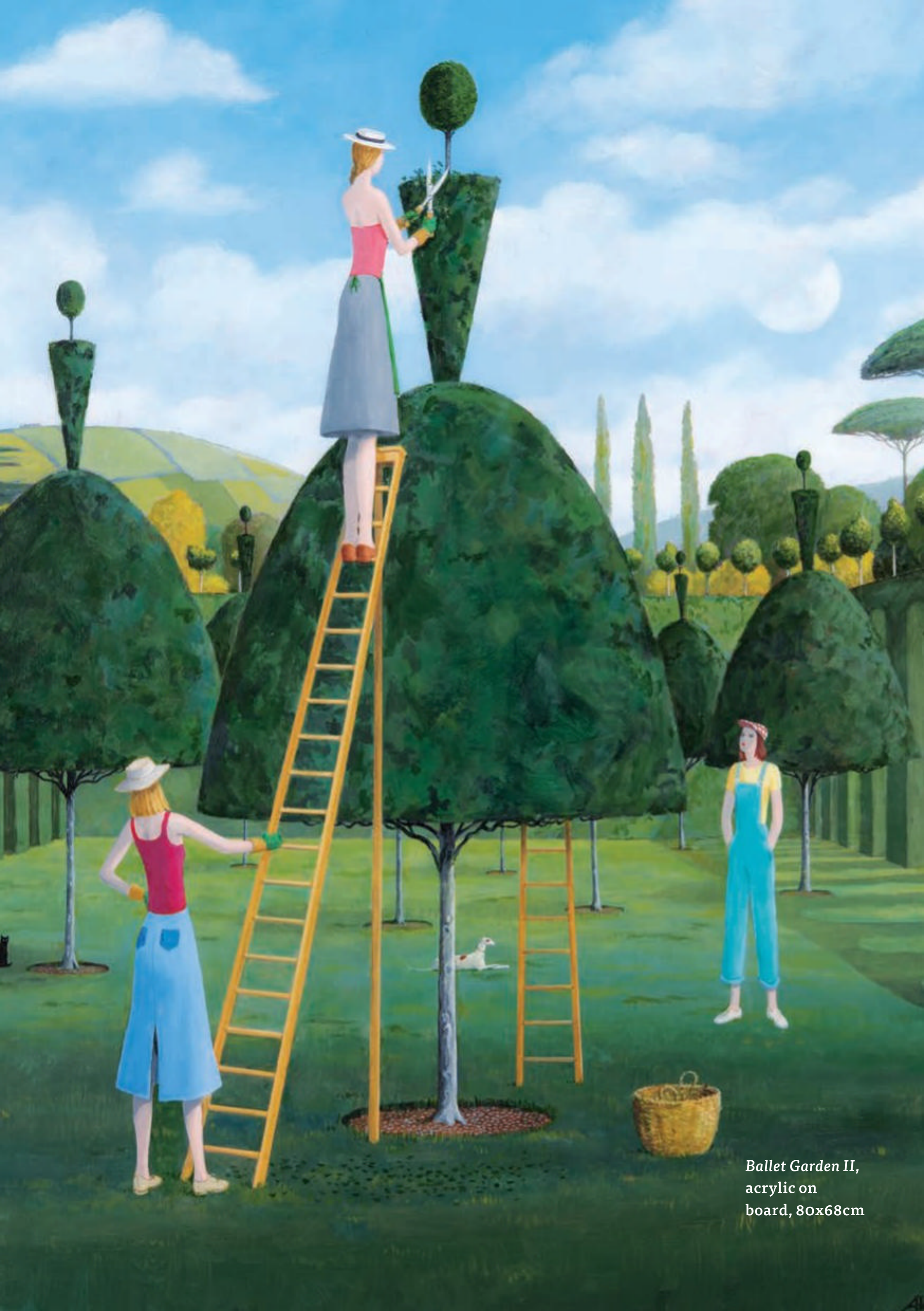
this supplement special is your one-stop shop for all things acrylic. Kicking off with a unique Q&A section, expert painters solve all your acrylic conundrums. This is followed by six pages of advice on what supports to use, the best palettes, how to slow drying time and, crucially, what *not* to do when working with the medium.

The rest of the issue features practical step-by-step stories to help you on your way. Learn how to paint a portrait from a photograph with Roger Deller and pick up tips on how to work best with this fast-drying medium. Aine Divine shows you how to be free and alive in your mark-making whilst composing a floral still life; you'll see that the beauty of acrylic is that you can always adjust the edges as the layer beneath dries so quickly and changes can be made swiftly. Next, let Terence Clarke show you an exercise in picture making as he paints a cat, drawing it out first using thinned acrylic paint, useful for making rapid changes as the drawing develops.

Did you think a street scene was impossible because of the medium's rapid drying times? Acrylic expert Hashim Akib shows you that this isn't the case; the trick is in confidently placed brushstrokes as well as the size of brush you use.

Finally, it's not just about acrylic paint; Sue Kemp shows you that acrylic ink is also an exciting medium to introduce to your art arsenal. And now all that's left is for you to roll up your sleeves and get started.

Niki Browes Editor



Ballet Garden II, acrylic on board, 80x68cm

ON ACRYLICS
ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Acrylic landscapes

Artist **Alan Parry** on how to mix elements of realism and imagination to make atmospheric paintings

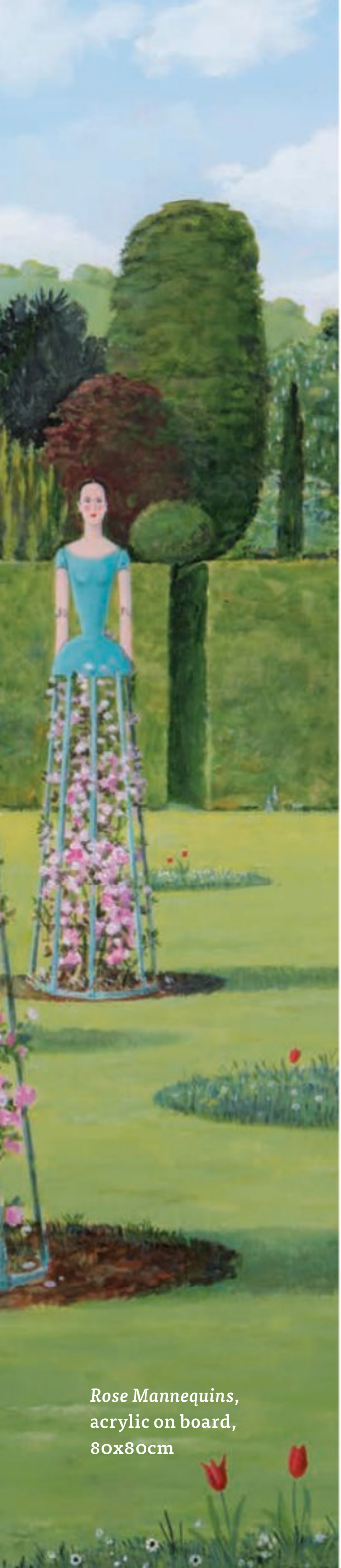
How do you balance the realistic and stylistic in a painting?
I like to combine realistic depictions of a landscape with stylistic flourishes that make it a personal vision. My imagery is a visual diary reflecting thoughts and experiences originating from places visited and the richness of country life. It is instinctive to work with shape, contour and colour, but within a landscape of my imagination.

Formal composition is central to your work. How do you plan a scene?
When I have thought of an idea for a painting, I begin by making small compositional sketches. First ideas and sketches are often visually strong and can sum up or capture the essence of the idea I am looking to explore. From here I may add more elements or simplify as the painting begins to take shape. I like to work on two or three ideas at once to unsettle the brain, which can aid the creative process. I do not paint from nature but am always inspired by it.

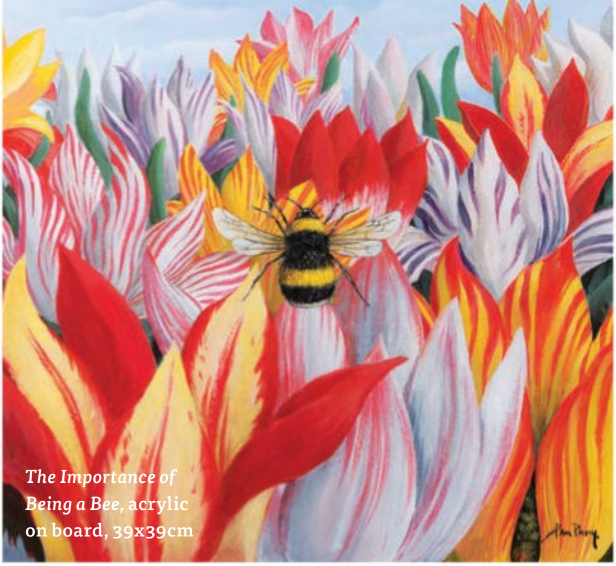
How can you play with the uncanny in paintings?
Exploring one's own imagination is crucial if you are looking to defy conventional notions of subject narrative or instinct. Choose ideas that interest you and with which you have an emotional bond. Court dangerous ideas: think them through or borrow from a wider landscape. Take a sentimental subject and do something entirely different with it, taking it to another reality that denies an easy explanation.

How can colour create atmosphere?
Each painting has its own considered colour palette. This is worked into the idea from day one. Using a restricted scheme will enhance mood, especially for darker subjects. Generally, I use a large spectrum of colours with some favourites for accents. I like to create mystical green tones, especially in the distant landscape where the image has a soft focus. I love full sun with a cloudy sky evoking the mystery of summer light.

Do you have any tips for working with green?
Green has so many guises from a dark almost-black green to yellow-lime and everything in between. I never paint a green surface onto a white ground. With dark green, I like to work over a reddish or dark pink. Sometimes, I'll use a strong red underpainting, which pulls the tones together. This warms the green because its presence is felt where it bleeds through to the surface. ▶



Rose Mannequins, acrylic on board, 80x80cm



The Importance of Being a Bee, acrylic on board, 39x39cm

What brushes do you recommend for working in fine detail in acrylic?
Good brushes are the best investment. I use watercolour brushes numbers 1,2 or 3. I always use sable brushes because they hold a point and have a natural spring. Synthetic brushes don't last as long and quickly lose their point. However, I do use synthetics in larger sizes and I like to experiment with different brushes: flat, rounds, fans, and so on. A rigger-style brush is useful for fine lines, perhaps for painting grass.

Is it best to plan a painting in detail?
I like to work in a traditional way. My paintings are meticulously scaled up from small sketches using a projector or a grid. This ensures compositional tensions established in the sketches are not lost. The boards are primed with gesso. Because of the quick- drying, I like to work the whole painting at once, adding fine detail towards completion.

How can I create depth and a sense of space in a painting?
By using perspective and colour in various tones. Dark tones foreground and lighter tones show distance. Many of my garden paintings establish distance using shadows from strong sunlight. The juxtaposition of one object or figure in front of another gives a sense of scale. Also, soft blues and greys create depth and distance, as does a colour graduation to a sky. Establishing a horizon will increase a sense of depth.

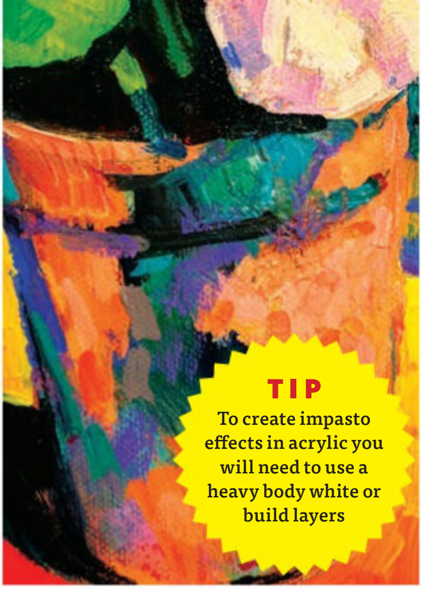
What does working on board offer?
It is a beautiful surface, especially for fine detail. It suits a water-based paint and I prefer its non-giving surface compared to canvas. Painting skies is satisfying as one can achieve a lovely, glazed flat surface. I use long and short brushes and, because of the quick-drying acrylic, I can rest my hand on the hard-dried surface for fine detail work. □

Acrylic problems solved

Terence Clarke answers the all-important questions

1 HOW DO I KEEP THE MEDIUM WET?

Keeping acrylic wet, especially in warm weather, is difficult. It can also be an expensive problem. The best solution is to use a small misting spray. Bottles are available in chemists. You can use the fine spray at different distances from the canvas to control the wetness. A regular little spray can keep the whole painting workable, even outside.



TIP

To create impasto effects in acrylic you will need to use a heavy body white or build layers

2 CAN I USE ACRYLICS IMPASTO?

Consistency is another problem with the medium and it varies between brands. You can't get an impasto effect without building layers or using a heavy body white – these are the solutions to impasto in acrylics. In the image to the left, you can see a wide range of thin to thick (impasto), building the solidity of the pot.

3 CAN I CONTROL HOW THE PAINT LEAVES THE BRUSH?

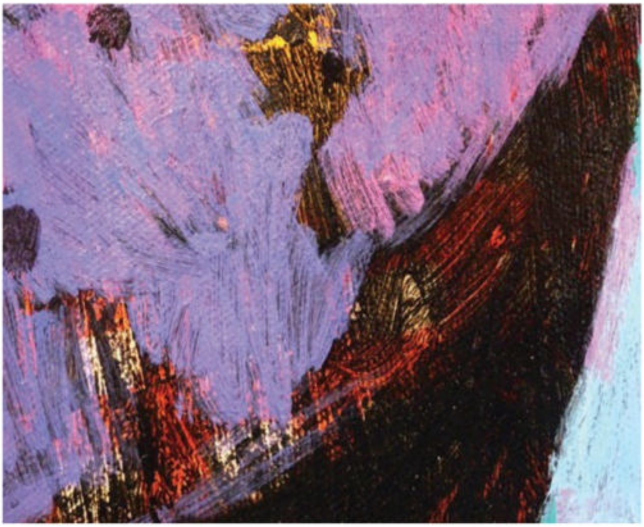
As it is much more liquid than oil paint, the way acrylic leaves the brush is subtly different. Oil is more viscous and tends to 'hold' the paint mark. I find acrylic marks 'flow' a little once they have hit the canvas. There is something nice about using that extra bit of fluidity as part of your expressiveness.

4 HOW DO I USE ACRYLIC'S OPACITY TO MY ADVANTAGE?

Acrylic paint is what is termed semi-opaque. Because it is essentially a water-filled plastic, acrylic can't achieve the absolute opacity of most oil paints. So covering an area or over-painting can present problems. The solution is to use this wonderful transparency to overlay colour on colour in rich skeins of thinned paint to create a kind of colour poetry. This is what acrylic is so good at achieving.

5 HOW CAN I CONTROL COLOUR INTENSITY?

Acrylic is a clean paint. When I first used it, I was amazed at how even muddy greys seemed to have a vivid quality. For this reason, I wouldn't use acrylic for a very tonal study. I use acrylic as a bright, spontaneous alternative to oil paint. My solution to the brightness of the pigment is to go with it and intensify the inherent brilliance with a free-flowing, splashy and vivid application.

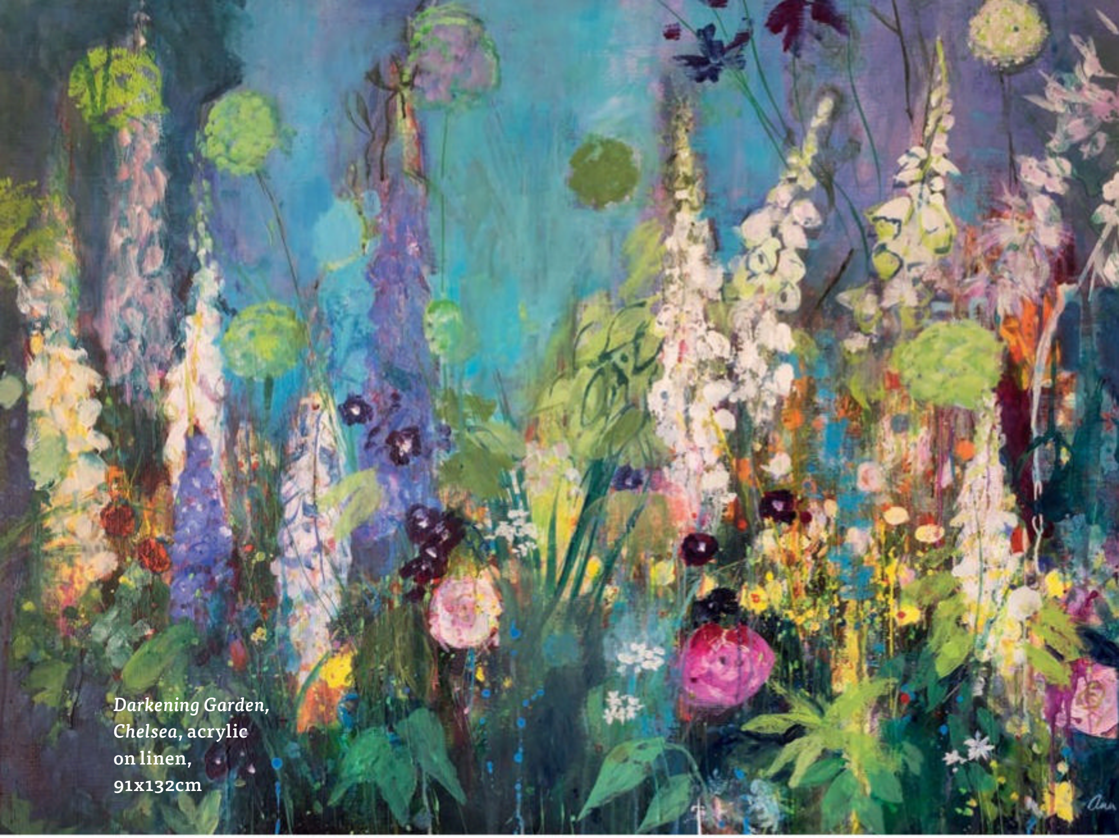


6 HOW CAN I COPE WITH ACRYLICS DRYING DARKER?

Because acrylic is filled with water, it reflects more light when wet. The tone darkens as the water evaporates. If you are working quickly and using a spray, this doesn't cause too much of a problem. However, if you return to a dry painting and try to match the same tone you can see on the canvas, it will not be accurate – it will dry a semi-tone darker. The solution is to mix a lighter tone and test it on paper.

terenceclarke.co.uk □

Go to p32 for Terence's insightful step-by-step



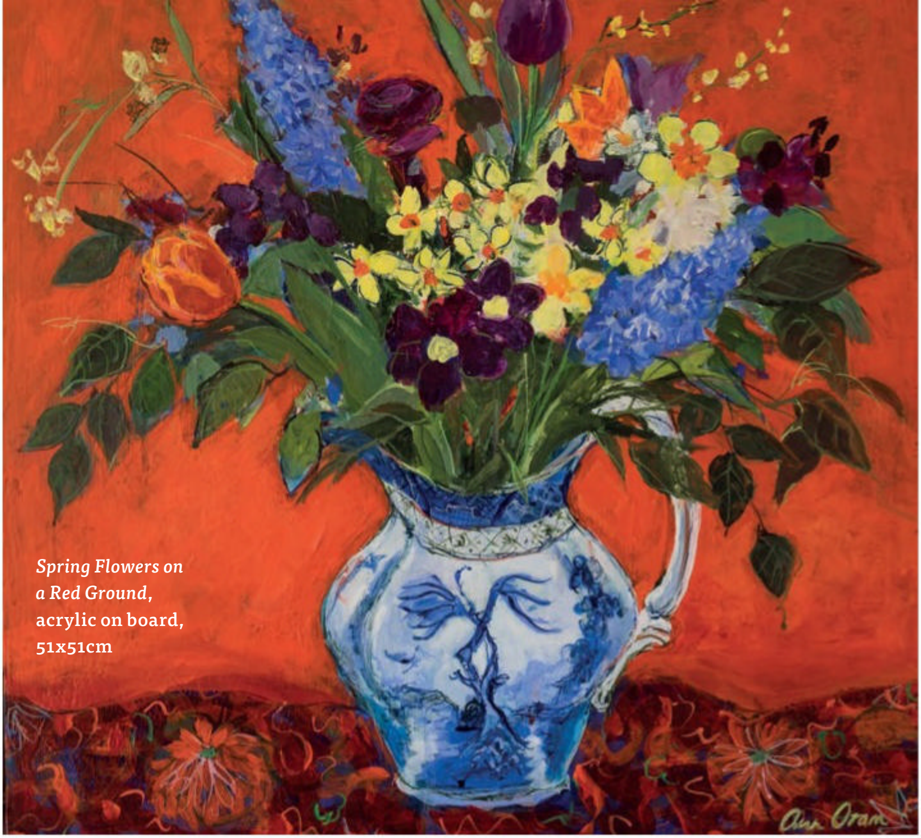
Darkening Garden, Chelsea, acrylic on linen, 91x132cm

Expressive acrylics

Want to create vibrant, colourful paintings that still retain a level of realism? **Ann Oram RSW** shares her techniques for breathing life into subjects

What paints do you favour and why?
I use mostly Golden Heavy Body or Fluid Acrylics. The colour is phenomenal and much stronger than other makes. Mixed media technique is another favourite: I can include watercolour, gouache, inks, wax candles and oil pastels. The last two give the wax-resist effect I love so much.

What do you look for in a subject?
It has to excite, I think that is the best advice I can give. A lot of artists will stick rigidly to one subject, but I'm always looking at everything. Usually, it will be about the colour, or it could be something to do with the architecture. A beautiful, harmonious garden and a cathedral will elicit



Spring Flowers on a Red Ground, acrylic on board, 51x51cm

the same response in me. You just feel it in the gut and know you have to work on it. Perhaps it is something spiritual I sense?

How does a typical painting begin?
I usually start with a coloured ground, perhaps one or several colours. I draw early on, rub it out and start all over again. A cloth is just as important as a brush in my painting materials. As I use acrylic a lot, I often use gesso to paint out bits that are not working so that I can start again. Trying to not be precious about the work is important. The minute you hold onto stuff, the more trouble you can get yourself into. Leave it be and return to look at it a day or two later, sometimes even longer. Seeing things with a fresh eye always leads to a better outcome, even if that means abandoning a work.

Do you always work from life for the garden paintings?
Sometimes. It really depends on where you are working. I go up to a garden in Fife, at Wemyss Castle. I know and love the garden and generally get it to myself. However, for this show at Thackeray Gallery, the imagery came mostly from Chelsea Flower Show. It was impossible to work among the crowds, so you had to just drink it all in and use your camera.

You manage to balance lots of surprising colours together seamlessly in one work. Do you plan colour schemes in advance?
You are led by the original image and idea in your mind's eye. It could be the mass of colour in the garden, or it could be the overall mood of the scene you want to depict. This also grows and develops with the painting. You can be halfway through and decide it needs more atmosphere, so you adjust the tones. Perhaps the colour has become a little too safe and needs to be brightened. It's a process of constant adjustment.

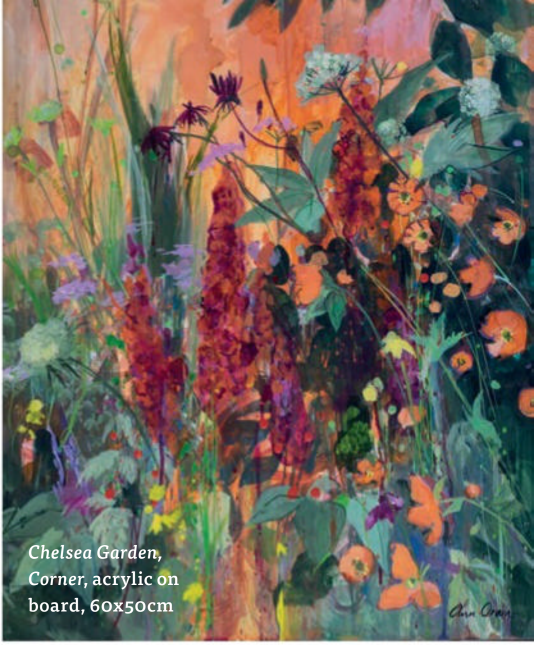
It is easy for bright colours to become muddy, yet you keep that vibrancy in your paintings. ▶

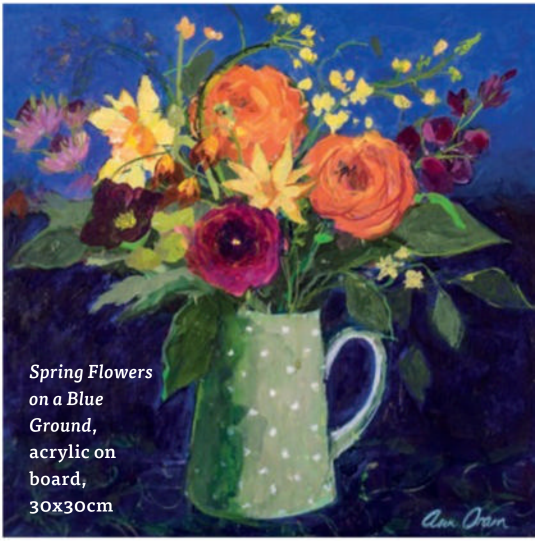
ON ACRYLICS

Do you have any advice for colour mixing?
Keep your water clean for starters. Also, palettes can become cluttered too so I use disposable ones and just peel off a layer when it all gets too full of mixed colours. Don't be afraid of priming over an area of the painting if the colour has gone off. The same applies to watercolour and gouache, you can sponge it out. However, if the remaining stain is not to your liking, then a watercolour primer will take you back to white. I would say that you must be careful not to overwork. The first vision is often the most accurate, and although you have to adjust parts of the painting, it's important not to lose the very essence of what you set out to do.

There are fantastic textures in your paintings. How do you develop those?
Texture is the making of a painting for me. With watercolour, I use wax or oil pastels and wash. This gives resistance which is so exciting. With acrylics, I like to use very thin washes alongside really thick paint with a painting medium mixed into it to give extra body. I love to splash colour on and also like to scumble the paint on with a palette knife so that you can get a play between the surface below and the new layer going on. The exciting thing about Golden Fluid Acrylics is that they can also be used just like a watercolour. The finish is very similar as it splodges and pools on board or canvas. Working flat is essential here, but then I add the less dilute acrylic paint at the easel later.

Is atmosphere important to you for expressive painting? Do you have certain things you need to paint to the best of your abilities?
I now have a wooden studio in the garden, although I paint in the house too. The garden studio is very peaceful and the light is very good. I like to play music, it was jazz yesterday afternoon. Sometimes silence is good too! Having solid tables to work on, shelves for storing still life, and a plan chest for finished work; this all helps.


Chelsea Garden, Corner, acrylic on board, 60x50cm


Spring Flowers on a Blue Ground, acrylic on board, 30x30cm

Some artists struggle with painting more expressively. Do you have any tips?
Confidence is something that you can grow. Some people have it in spades and others will always feel lacking. I do think that you should not compare yourself to others, and just do your own thing. If you feel excited by your subject and results, you will always feed that inner confidence. Pleasing others is not the way to

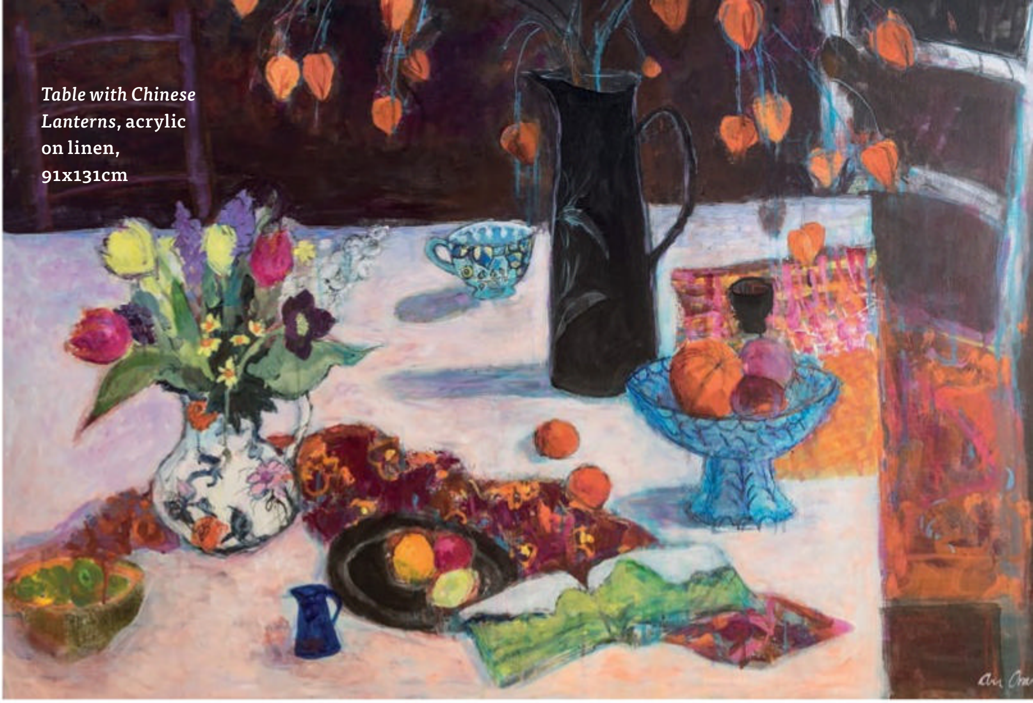


Table with Chinese Lanterns, acrylic on linen, 91x131cm

go. Enjoy the process regardless of the outcome, that is where creativity begins. Eventually, it will fall into place and you will find your own voice.

Is your stance and how you hold the paintbrush important?
I work on the floor for the large pieces and on easels and tables for the rest. I like to stand at the easel, as you can cross the room and look at your work from a distance. That's very important. I also have a Stokke adjustable stool which means I can work at an angle (it's on a rocking circular base) and close to the canvas if need be. I usually hold my brushes at the end of the handle so that I don't exert too much pressure. More detailed work requires a firmer hand and working nearer the canvas with the brush being held nearer the tip end. I work that way towards the end of a painting as I don't like to be bogged down with too much tight detail earlier on.

What brushes do you use for the thinner stems and fine, drawn elements on your paintings?
I like to use Pro Arte swordliners and riggers. You can draw lines into wet or dry paint depending on what kind of effect you are after. Working into wet paint is exciting because you have little control and the lines will blur. Obviously, on a dry surface, it will achieve more precision. Because I work with water-based mediums, the paint can dry very quickly. The only thing that is different is if you are working on a huge watercolour – the puddles of colour will take several hours to dry. So leave well alone in this instance.

Your paintings often include vibrant splashes of colour but in a very controlled manner. How do you go about making these marks?
I use Golden Fluid Acrylics for this and find that there is a terrific ability for them to be like an ink and very splashy. I splatter with fan brushes and the swordliners too. Pipettes are quite good fun to use too. Anything I don't like simply gets wiped away with a cloth. That's about the only control I have. I think the reason I paint this way is that you have less control overall and because of this, the materials do what they do and I find that quite exciting.
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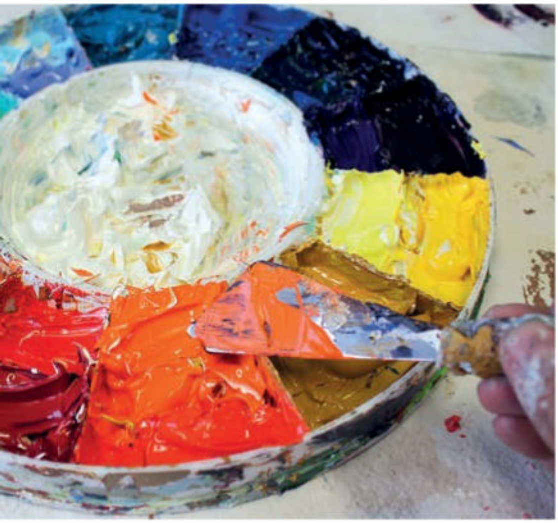
Manage your palette

Over the next six pages, acrylic artist **Hashim Akib** offers his advice



I work in acrylic so choosing a palette and managing paint is vital because of the rapid drying time. A stay-wet palette is often recommended but I find them problematic. Using damp tissue or paper as a base to place paint on can create pools of muddy colour or a mix that's too runny.

I use a Radial Sorting tray (top left), which is recommended for watercolour and costs just under £10. It is plastic and contains 12 of the deepest wells of any artist's palette, as well as a large central well. It is also circular with a large groove underneath to make it easier to grip. Although it doesn't come with a lid, I improvise with a cake stand. An alternative is a plastic nut or snack selection tray (top right). Their compartments provide deeper wells and they have tight-fitting lids.

The Mijello Artelier Airtight Peel-Off Palette is made for oils and acrylics, and comes with a lid that doubles as a mixing tray. The wells aren't deep but there are plenty of different

sizes. It is handy for painting outdoors, too, and you can buy one for under £20. The advantage of all-plastic palettes is that once unused paint dries, you can peel it off.
I run warm water over dried paint and prise it off with a palette knife.

I use a lot of paint which prolongs drying, but small amounts will harden quickly. I work with large brushes and penetrate the paint's surface regularly, which makes it less susceptible to drying. As paint will become corrupt by the end of a day's painting, I use a palette knife to skim away muddied colours.

Avoid keeping your palette next to a warm radiator or in direct sunlight and, if possible, store it in a cool place.
If you are in a hot climate, spray water over your palette but avoid soaking. An alternative would be to use a spray containing liquid retarder or Liquitex Palette Wetting Spray or add flow improver with water, to retain the strength of colour. ▶

Supports

Hashim on the options you need to consider when choosing your surface

Using acrylics on varnished surfaces will result in paint cracking and peeling. You may not notice this for a while but, if you are planning to paint a masterpiece, it might not stand the test of time. This also goes for previously used canvases painted with oils. The water-based acrylic will not adhere to the oil content on the surface. If you are applying acrylics on varnished wood, sand down the surface beforehand.

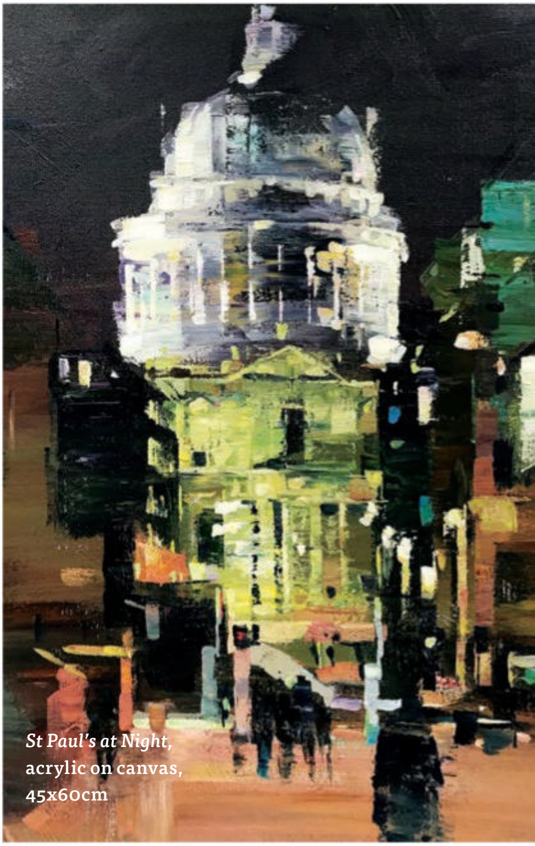
KEEP IT SIMPLE

There are plenty of straightforward supports available, including paper, boards, panels and canvas. There are also acrylic pads, which have a surface texture similar to canvas but are already primed so acrylic can glide nicely over it. You can use watercolour paper, but it's unprimed so paint tends to drag and sink into the grain. Run some gesso, a priming medium or white acrylic over it first to seal the surface.

Boards and panels come in wood and aluminium. Aluminium that has been treated to take acrylic is a rigid, lightweight support, which is not prone to warping over time. My preferred support is canvas for one main reason: there is less need for framing. Simply run a cord behind and it's ready for hanging.

PRICE AND QUALITY

Canvases come in rolls, primed or unprimed, with smooth, medium and textured surfaces. Stretchers tend to be wood, but can also be aluminium. They can be made to measure. Linen canvas is the most expensive and is great for flowing applications of paint. Cotton is more economical and comes in various thicknesses. You can tell a good-quality canvas by how taut it is. Think of a drum: the tighter the better.

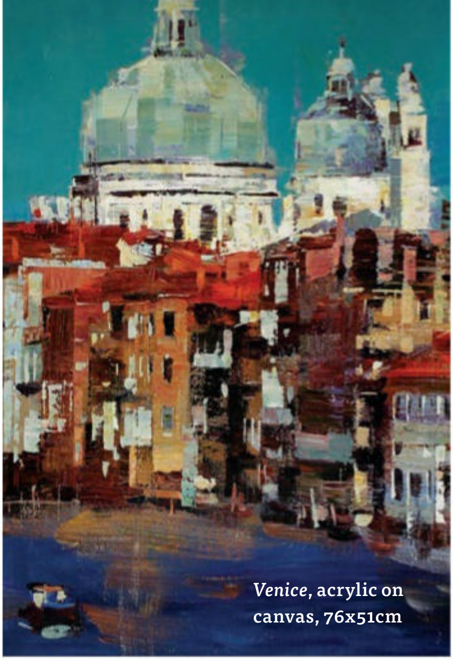


St Paul's at Night, acrylic on canvas, 45x60cm

WHERE TO SHOP

Loxley has a very reasonably priced standard canvas with a lovely smooth surface. For artist-quality, I use Daler-Rowney – it is as close to a drum as I've found – and Winsor & Newton. If you want bespoke sizes or larger quantities, it's worth looking up independent makers.

Canvas is great if you want to recycle or repaint the same surface. I use thick paint and find two to three repaints is the limit before you start to lose adherence. Avoid leaving a canvas next to a heater or exposed to sunlight as the stretcher will warp (check canvases to see how level they are). Warping can be rectified by a thick frame but it will be noticeable in an unframed painting on a wall.



Venice, acrylic on canvas, 76x51cm

Retarder

Now, **Hashim** reveals his advice on how to slow drying times

One of the main concerns about acrylic is the drying time, which will seem too rapid for the uninitiated. On average, artist-quality acrylic paints take half an hour to dry completely if used in a thin layer. Thicker applications take one-to-two hours depending on the air temperature. Experience will help you understand these qualities but, in the meantime, you can use mediums such as retarders and slow-drying gels.

Medium isn't essential. You can use water to dilute acrylic but it will affect the pigment's richness. As well as retarders, there are moulding pastes to thicken paint, gloss or satin varnishes to mimic an oil finish, and products to create flow with no colour shift once dry, such as flow-enhancer, glazing gel and matt or gloss medium. Thicker consistencies of acrylic have longer drying times, while using generous quantities on your palette will keep paint workable if it is prodded regularly.

GEL OR LIQUID?

Retarder comes in a gel or liquid form. The gel is suitable for more impasto-style applications, whereas fluid is great for producing flowing colour. Add any slow-drying medium to acrylic on a mixing tray to extend working times. Be careful not to use too much with small amounts of pigment because it will dull colour and cause adherence issues. I use a slightly unconventional method with retarder. I use the fluid form in a diffuser bottle and spray it over thick acrylic that has already been applied to canvas. It is fairly passive but allows a small opening to push paint around for drag effects and to meld colours.

WHAT TO BUY

Retarders are readily available from art manufacturers. Golden produces a 3.78lr bottle, while the cheapest I found was a 60ml tube by Vallejo. My preference is Liquitex Slow-Dri Fluid Retarder, which is available in a 118ml bottle. Glazing medium has slow-drying properties if you prefer thinner applications. I came across a new Liquitex Palette Wetting Spray for acrylics that comes in a 237ml bottle. Spray a fine mist over your palette or painting.

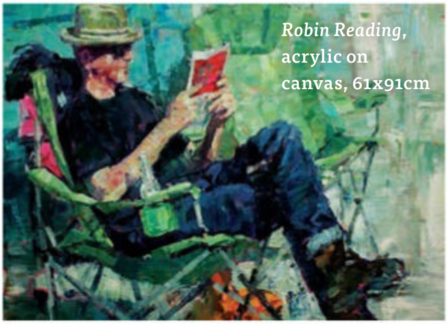
I use retarder early as I work on the overall image to allow more working time. Whether you are using a slow-drying medium or not, the key is to be decisive and paint with momentum. Any additional tools or materials will take your concentration away from your painting.

TRY SPRAYING SLOW-DRYING MEDIUM

A new technique I've adopted relies on rapid, thick applications and dragging pigments around. It is less to do with blending and more about paint effects colliding. Rather than adding retarder to the mix at the beginning, I use a liquid version in a diffuser and spray liberally over layers of paint before they dry. This allows a little more working time or additional spreads of paint. More refined brushwork along with the drag effects creates interesting contrast. ▸

Traditional vs. Contemporary

Next, **Hashim** explores two approaches to the medium



Robin Reading, acrylic on canvas, 61x91cm

Many of my students say they want to loosen up or tighten up and so on, revealing a bias towards a form of art. Depicting a scene realistically with naturalistic colours is a well-trodden path to building confidence and knowledge. Small brushes and limited palettes are used, following traditional values dating back to the Renaissance and early French realism.

RISK-TAKING

Some find it hard to break away from learned habits. The advent of photography steered art away from traditional, representational forms to include more emotional responses to a subject. This can usually be seen in raw, exposed brush marks, expressive colours or abstract shapes. The versatility of acrylic allows for a multitude of approaches. But it is a modern medium and is, perhaps, more successful when used to depict a contemporary style due to the range of pigments, quick drying times creating more pronounced marks, and the variety of consistencies.

YOUR PALETTE

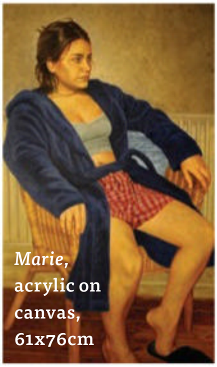
Traditional palettes include Umbers, Crimson, Ochre, Ultramarine, Sap or Hookers Green and a creamier white such as a Zinc. Traditional painting exploits tonal ranges and dramatic colour shifts are less frequent.

A contemporary palette includes more dominant pigments such as Magenta or Rose, Cyan Blue, Phthalo Green, Black and, perhaps, an opaque Titanium White. The bolder use of colour reflects a stronger emotional statement and is applied with either more vigour or as abstract forms.

My two paintings show a traditional approach (bottom) and a more contemporary style (left). The first was painted early in my career when I used a representational approach. It has a limited earthy palette with soft transitions of colour. I used an acrylic flow improver and slow-drying retarder to blend smoothly with short, translucent layers. This is a painstaking approach which can look rigid.

The second is up-to-date and shows an edgier feel with exposed brush marks. Although the colours are restrained, the Magenta base flickers through to complement the greens. The paint is used neat, applied with large flat brushes, scraped and dragged around the canvas to create a sense of animation. The painting was completed in one sitting and proved a far more enjoyable painting to produce.

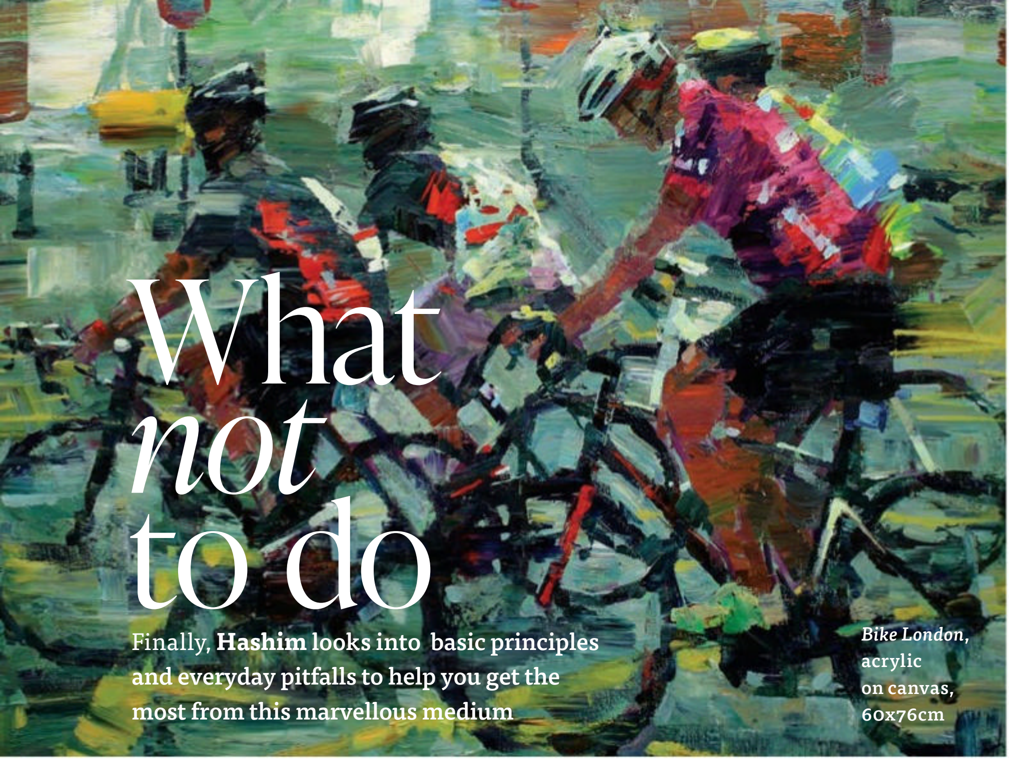
Combining aspects of both old and new is a great way of showcasing an understanding of art history, but also a way of progressing your practice.



Marie, acrylic on canvas, 61x76cm

What *not* to do

Finally, **Hashim** looks into basic principles and everyday pitfalls to help you get the most from this marvellous medium



Bike London, acrylic on canvas, 60x76cm

Avoid leaving tubes of acrylic or a loaded palette in direct sunlight or next to a radiator: the paint will harden rapidly. This also goes for canvases, which can warp. The quickest way to ruin brushes is to let acrylic dry on them, so rinse thoroughly with soap and water. If you dampen brushes before painting the moisture will stop paint drying. Acrylics dry darker and duller. Compensate by mixing lighter or brighter colours at the start and use neater applications, which produce a more luminous finish.

DON'T LOSE MOMENTUM

Because acrylics are fast drying, most of my new students use small quantities of paint, so there is less waste. The downside is that they need to reload the palette throughout the course of a painting, which halts momentum. Some artists don't see this as an issue because their approach is a protracted one. However, I work quickly because I see painting as a passion that works off enthusiasm, energy and the spontaneity of the moment. This means that every second you're distracted, the fluidity is lost. Try purchasing a palette with deeper wells to keep the paint fresh for longer. If there is paint left over, place the palette in a plastic bag and store it at a cool room temperature. If you aren't going to paint for a while, occasionally prod the paint with a palette knife to keep it workable.

DON'T OBSESS OVER DETAIL

Avoid thinking small or worrying about details. Acrylics can be diluted or used neat but the golden rule is to avoid overworking: constantly blending, layering or fine-tuning produces flat, lifeless colours. Yet it is less devastating than overworking watercolour because acrylics can be painted over several times. If you have made a mistake, try not to dwell on it. Paint over the area with a base colour or white paint. If you catch a mistake early, wipe off the paint with a damp tissue. I encourage everyone to play, break boundaries and avoid being too cautious. Nothing bad will happen and you'll learn more about the medium in a short space of time than by perfecting paintings. Slap on colour, try different ways of mark-making or, for something more finished, limit colours to give you less to worry about. Above all? Enjoy. ***hashimakib.co.uk*** ☐

Go to p38 for Hashim's insightful step-by-step

Face value

Boost your skills with **Roger Dellar**'s simple steps to painting a dynamic portrait

I once painted at a local primary school to demonstrate how an artist works. One little girl, aged eight, watched me, glued to my side Towards the end, she said: "I get it. First you do it all roughly, then you resolve it." I thought it was very profound for an eight year old.

I treat a portrait as I would any subject: I let the subject find me. I end with some implied detail, but start by enjoying the exploration of the subject and paint. For this acrylic painting, I worked from a photograph of an old friend, trying to catch the warm winter light on his face.

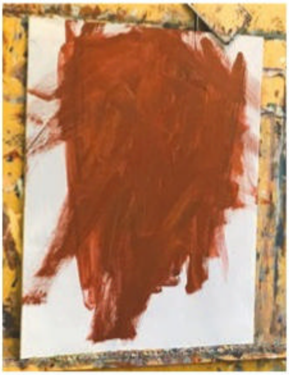
rogerdellar.com

ROGER'S MATERIALS

Acrylic
Titanium White, Yellow Ochre, Cadmium Red Deep, Process Cyan Blue and Mars Black

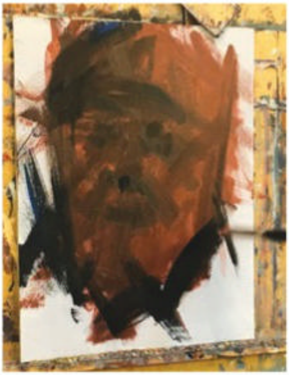
Brushes
Rosemary & Co brushes from the Roger Dellar selection, mainly the no 10 flat ivory and no 4 flat. Plus a rigger, fan brush and palette knife

Support
A piece of white chalk
Rag
Palette
A white piece of old signboard



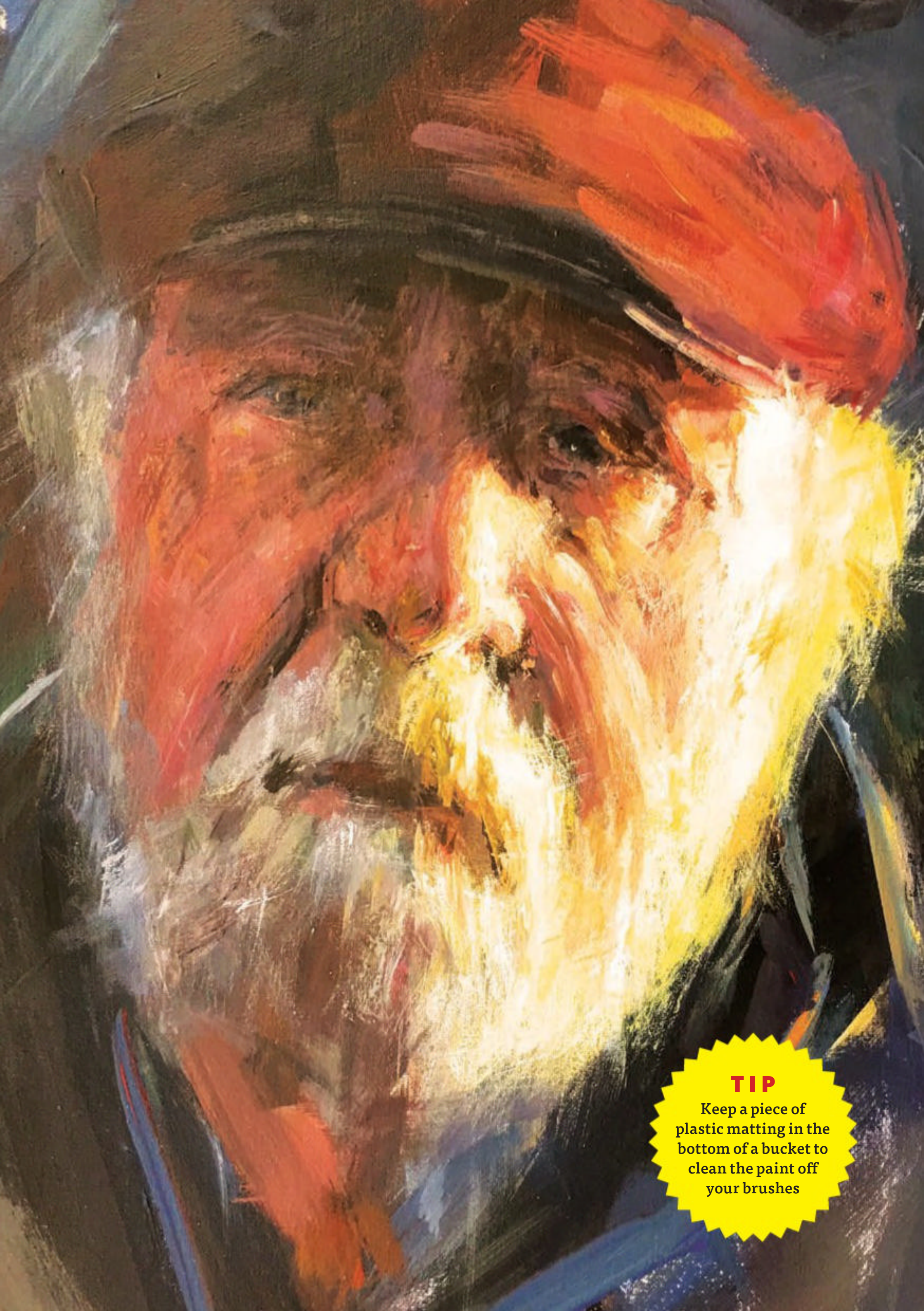
1 BLOCK IN THE MID-TONE COLOUR

I begin by mixing my paint with a palette knife, aiming for a neutral, mid-tone colour. I block in this colour with a no 10 flat brush. At this point, the aim is to create a silhouette of the head to give a recognisable shape and, at the same time, push paint in different directions, so I don't limit my thinking.



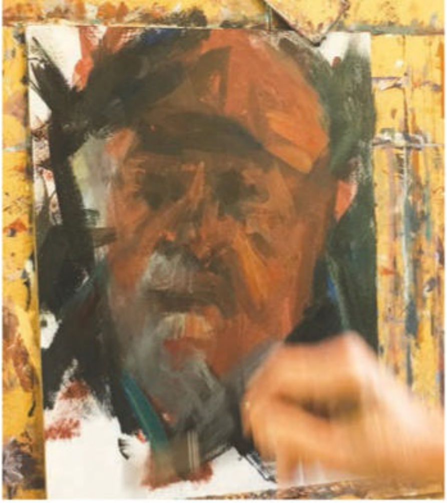
2 PAINT DARKER FORMS

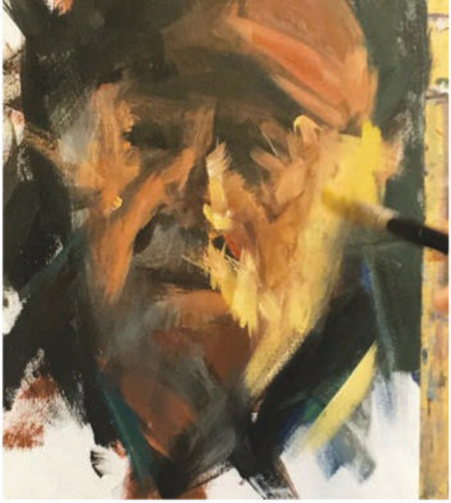
Now using the no 10 brush in a gestural way, I put in the darker forms. At this stage I have no intention of getting an exact likeness – I am just trying to make the head look vaguely humanoid and make the marks very angular and dynamic. I'm very much exploring the composition here and balancing things up – if a mark lacks that dynamic quality, I counter it with a diagonal. ▶



TIP

Keep a piece of plastic matting in the bottom of a bucket to clean the paint off your brushes





3 PLACE SHADOW AREAS

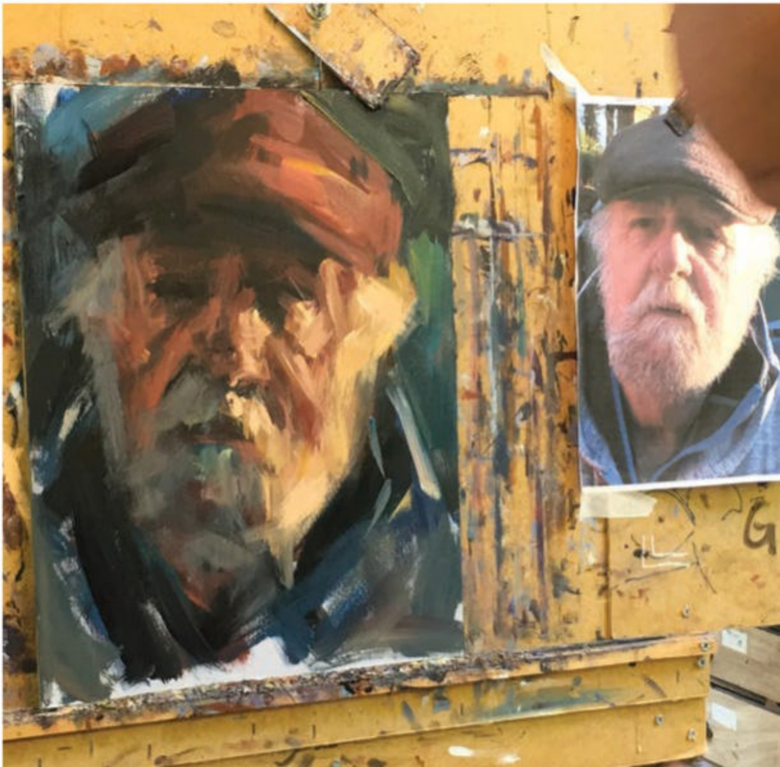
I am now introducing cooler, neutral greys for shadow areas. Every mark I make comes from the arm, rather than the fingers. I enjoy the process of mark-making. It ought to be pointed out that acrylic paints tend to become darker as they dry, therefore everything I do will need to have a degree of subtlety.

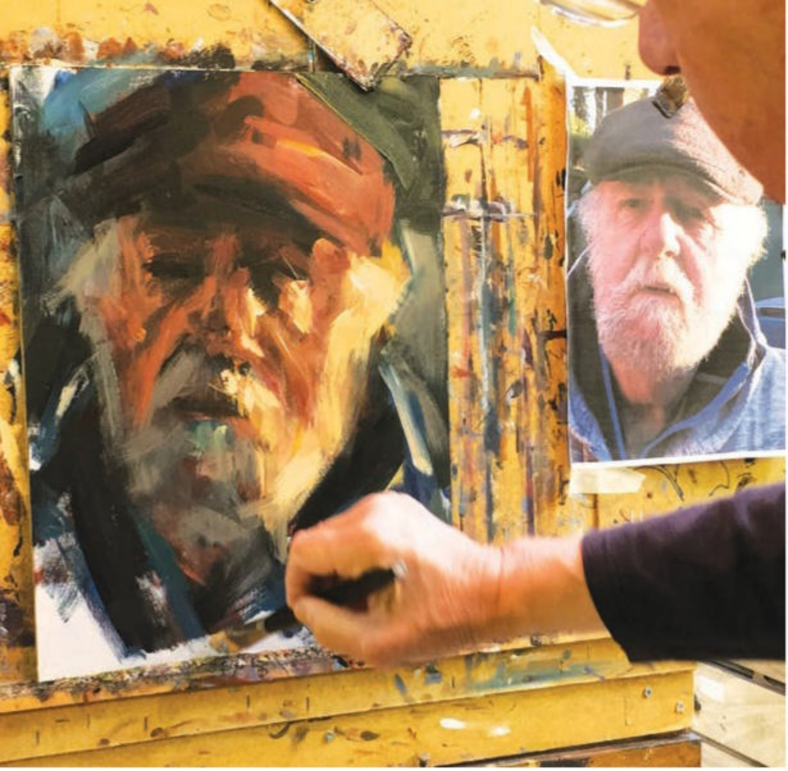
4 DESCRIBE FORM

I add warmer lights, loading the brush with large quantities of paint. I start putting in sunlight, working impasto. This should begin to better describe the form and achieve a greater sense of depth. The fact that the paint is thicker will – as with oil painting – suggest contours. As you lay on paint, lift the brush towards the end of the stroke to feather out the edge.

6 CREATE HIGHLIGHTS

I am now trying to establish planes within planes, subdividing larger shapes into smaller blocks of colour. The temple area has a highlight where the bony area and cheek connect to the beard. I also give the nostril area a lighter, higher highlight.



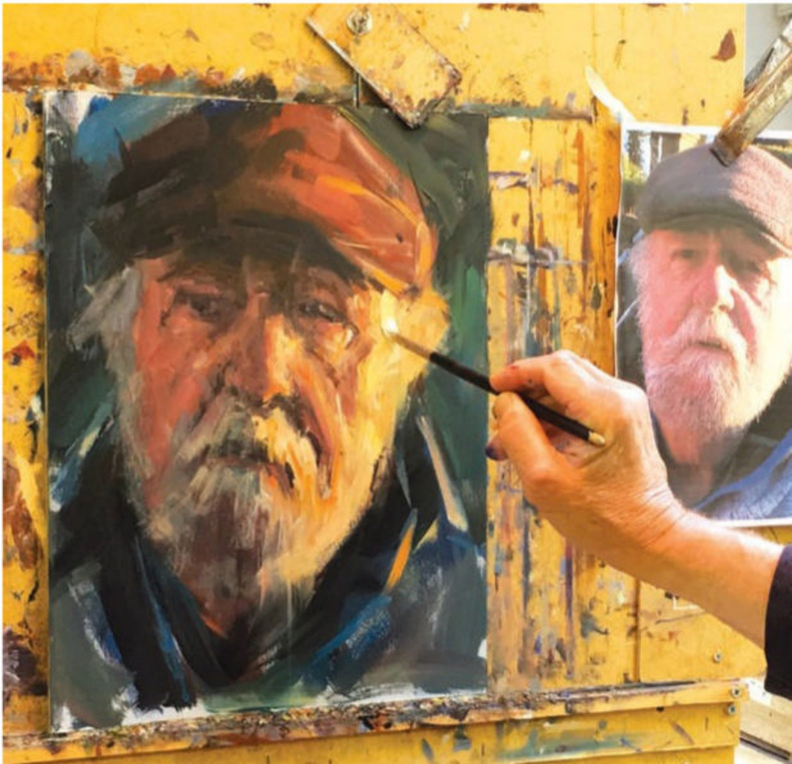


5 CONNECT THE PLANES OF THE FACE

Still working on the light and lighter mid-tones, I will, at times, connect the planes of the face together. I introduce some neutral greys, keeping the paint loaded but not watered down. I am trying to build the paint and create a series of marks that are pleasing in themselves, countering the strokes; creating the planes with marks at different angles.

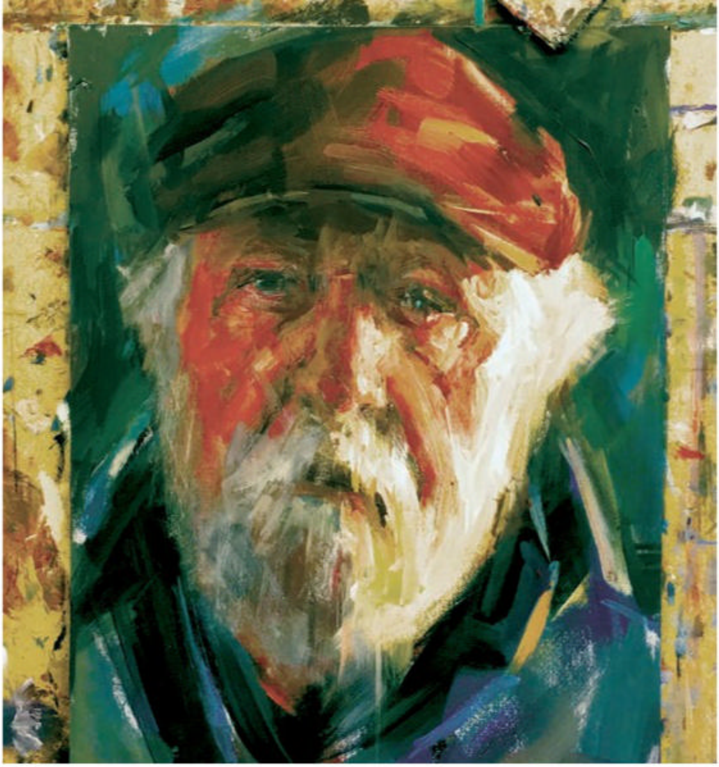
7 ADD SMALL MARKS

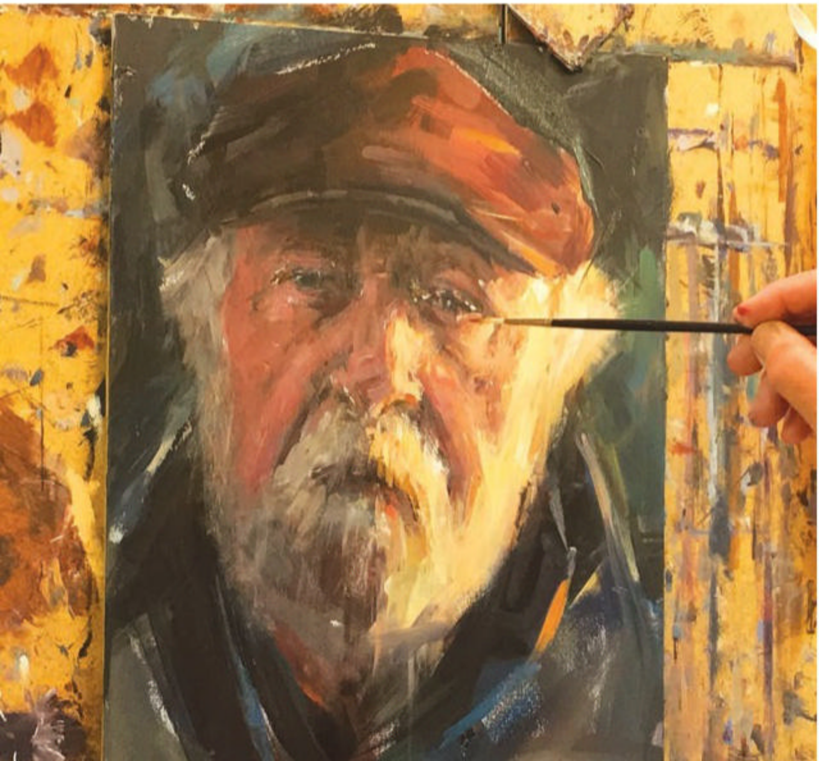
Changing to a small no 4 flat ivory brush, I add smaller marks of lighter tone to the temple area and connect those marks to the cheekbones. It is noticeable how much the paint has darkened from the previous stage. This is different from working with oils and gouache. When selecting the lightest tone, I always ask what colour the white is. For example, is the light warm or cool? I would not use white alone. ▶



8 CHECK FOR ACCURACY

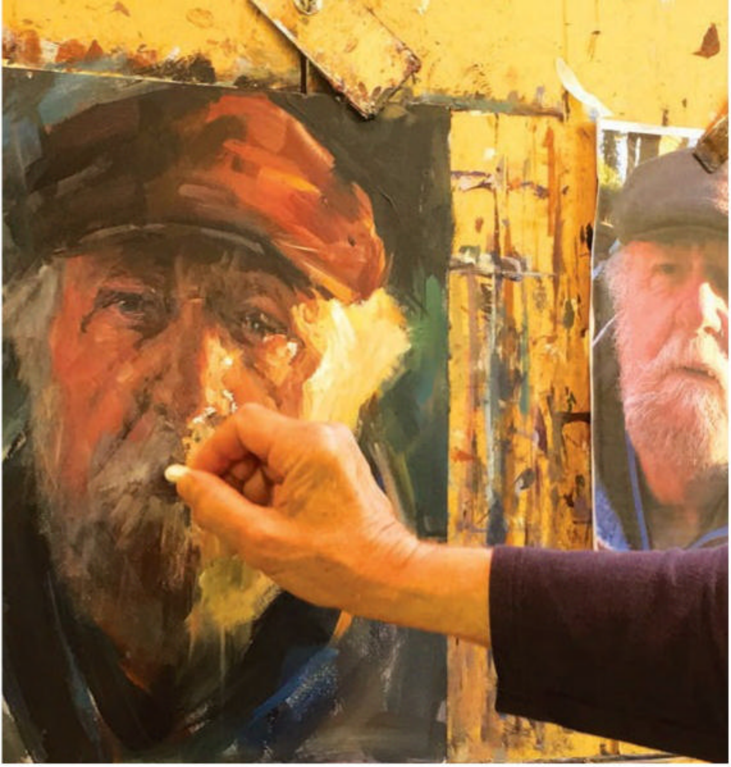
I feel it has the look of Joe, but there are inaccuracies. As I am working from a photograph, I can turn the painting and photograph upside down to check for differences. Alternatively, you could look at the reverse image in a mirror. When working from life, I often have a mirror behind my painting so I can evaluate as I go.





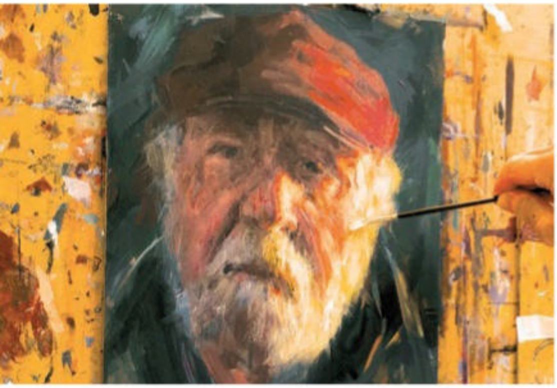
10 IMPROVE PROPORTIONS

I am using my Rosemary & Co rigger brush at this stage. The nose is realigned and proportions are improved. I now feel like I am on the home straight with the painting. Detail can begin to come in once I am satisfied with the progress of the painting as a whole.



9 STUDY ANGLES

I am using a piece of chalk to check the relationships between the angles of the eyes, nostrils, corner of mouth and so on. I only use chalk in this way on oil paintings once they are dry. If I do not like a mark that I have made, I simply wet it with my finger and remove it. If a brushstroke seems correct to me, I will then paint over and modify. These over-painting marks serve as *pentimento* – a change made by the artist during the process of painting – which adds life and interest to the surface of the artwork.

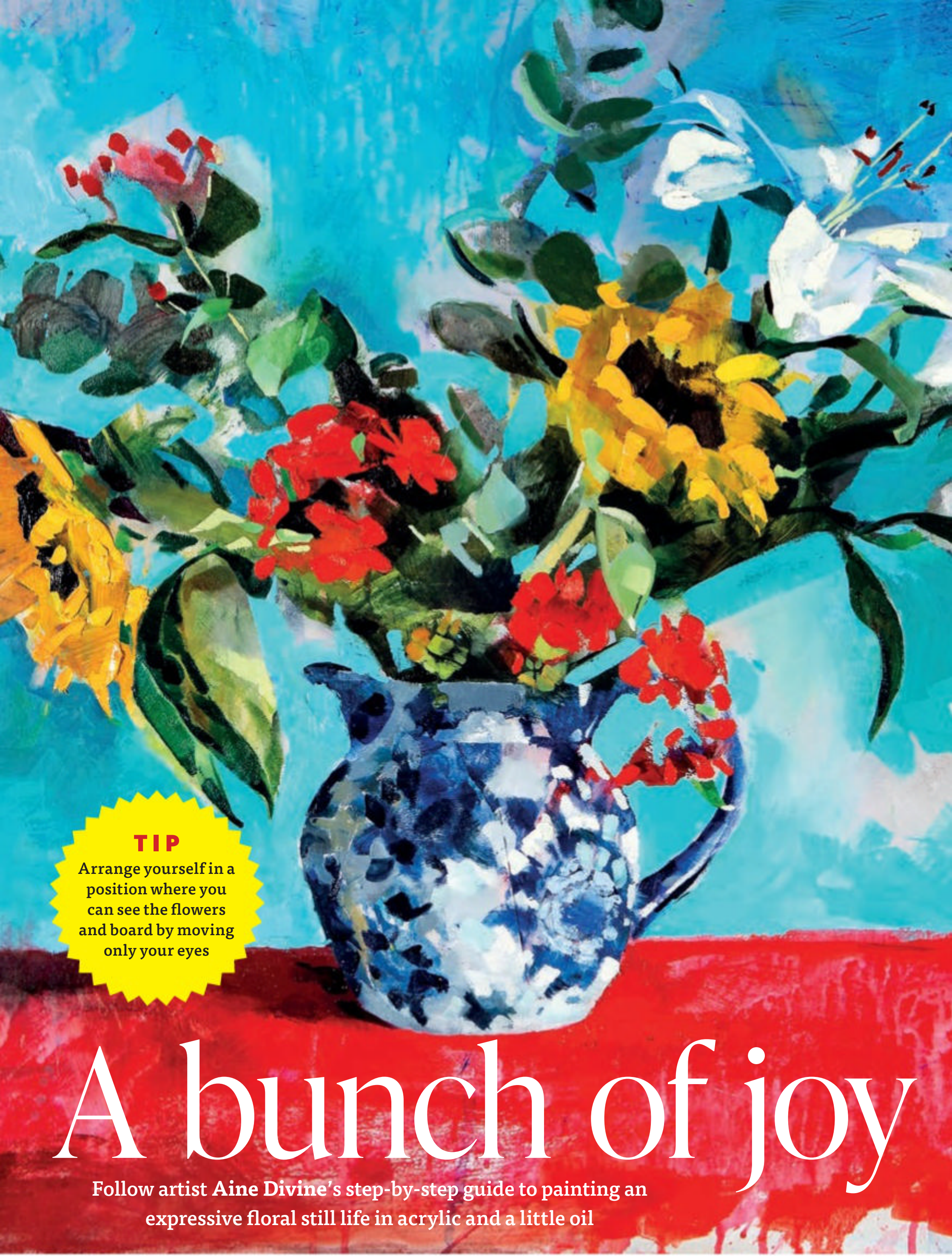


11 CREATE VIBRANCY

I am now using a fan brush to create texture within the beard. I use paint impasto – or thickly – and vary the pressure of the brush, often using optical mixing with cools and warms to give areas vibrancy. Optical colour mixing involves placing two colours next to, or near each other, on the canvas. The viewer will perceive the colour as a mix of the two, even though they are separate. ◻

TIP

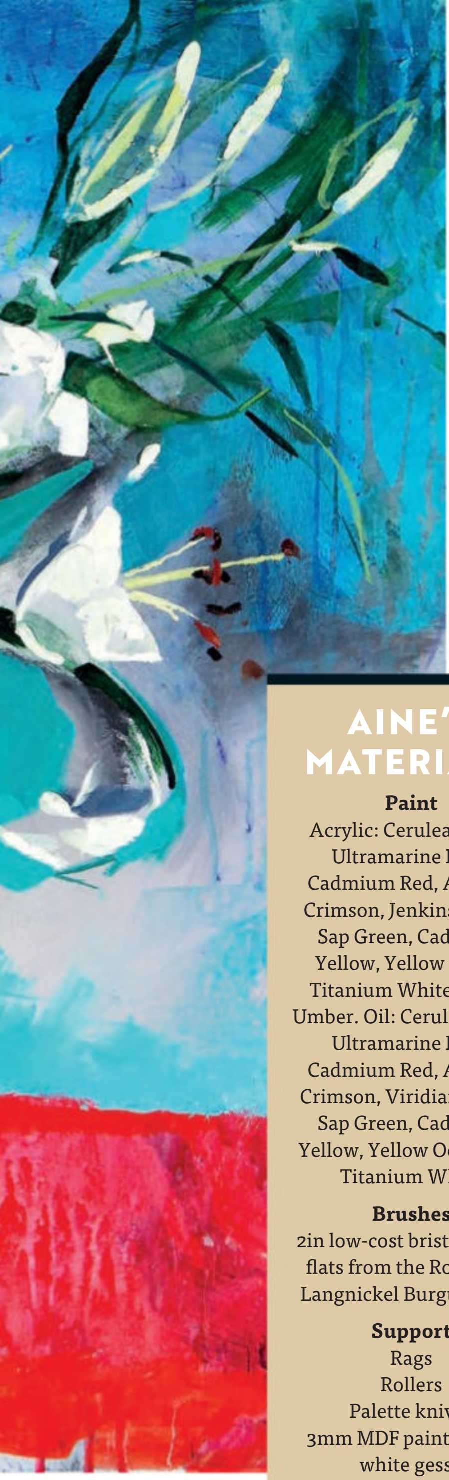
Acrylic paint dries quickly. Have a finger at the ready to keep marks from having hard edges



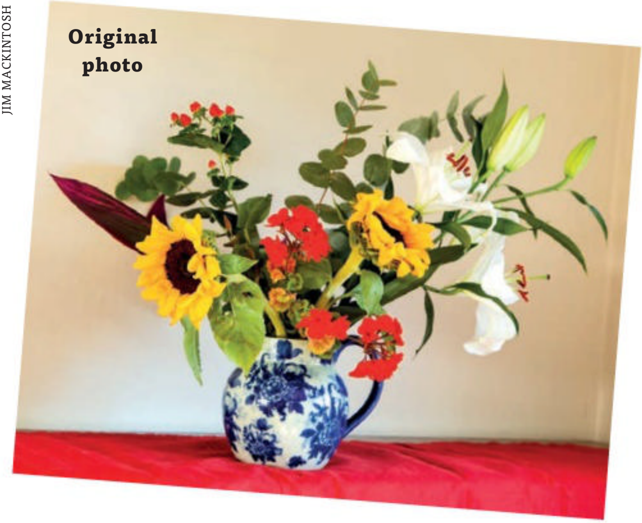
TIP
Arrange yourself in a position where you can see the flowers and board by moving only your eyes

A bunch of joy

Follow artist **Aine Divine**'s step-by-step guide to painting an expressive floral still life in acrylic and a little oil



JIM MACKINTOSH



AINE'S MATERIALS

Paint

Acrylic: Cerulean Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Red, Alizarin Crimson, Jenkins Green, Sap Green, Cadmium Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Titanium White, Burnt Umber. Oil: Cerulean Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Red, Alizarin Crimson, Viridian Green, Sap Green, Cadmium Yellow, Yellow Ochre and Titanium White

Brushes

2in low-cost bristle brush; flats from the Royal and Langnickel Burgundy set

Support

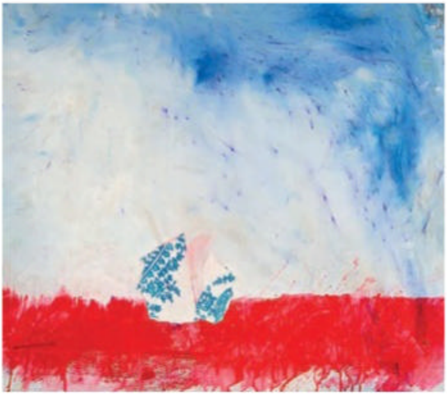
Rags
Rollers
Palette knives
3mm MDF painted with white gesso

I want to pass on my expressive approach to painting still lifes from observation using mixed media. I find this way of working freeing and fun. When a painting is started with an attitude of freedom and joy, this shines through the finished work. Be free and alive in your mark-making, and adventurous with colour and paint consistency. This happens naturally if we don't pin ourselves down to a particular outcome. As we observe the subject, inspiration enters: we become curious and intuitively begin to play.

Using acrylic means that you can always adjust the edges; the layer beneath dries and changes can be made swiftly. As the painting progresses, the pace slows but inspiration can remain if we stay alert, even if moves are fewer and chosen with more care.

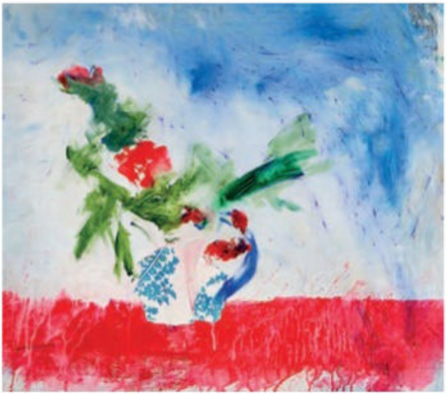
I introduce oil paint when I begin to model the forms. Clarity is important. We want to find the simplest way of transferring the information. One clean brushstroke can be more potent than five approximate attempts. When in doubt, I wipe away an unsatisfying oil mark with a rag and make another attempt at "getting" it. You don't want your careful observation to be lost with a half-hearted mark.

ainedivinepaintings.co.uk ▶



1 EXPLORE BOUNDARIES

It's easy to be wild using acrylic paint and collage. Here, the whole table top is rolled on with fluid red acrylic and the jug is explained in a few torn blue pieces of wallpaper. The boundary between parts is deliberately breached, and I am left with a feeling of liveliness and stimulus to react to.

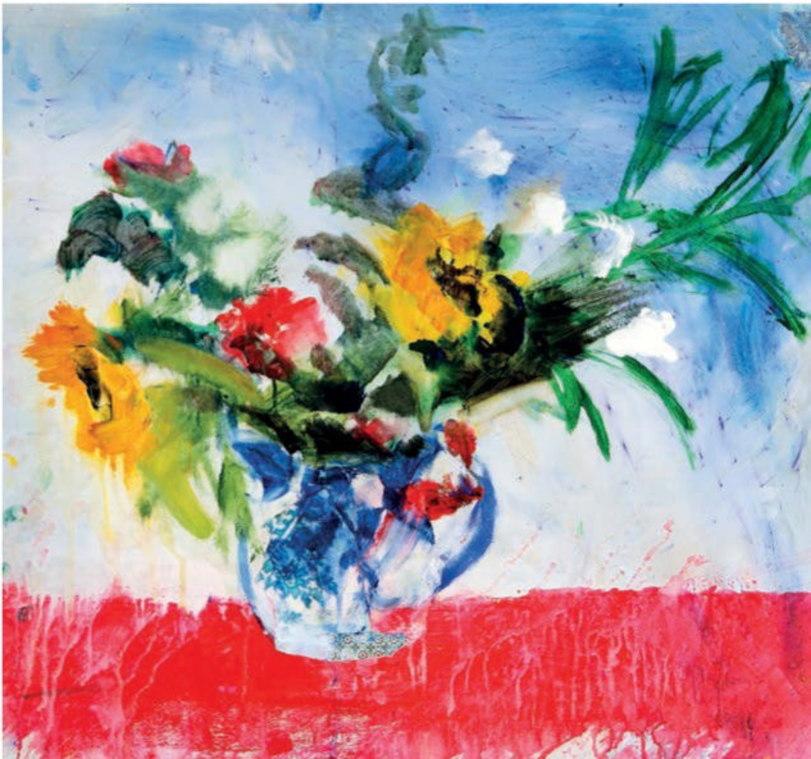


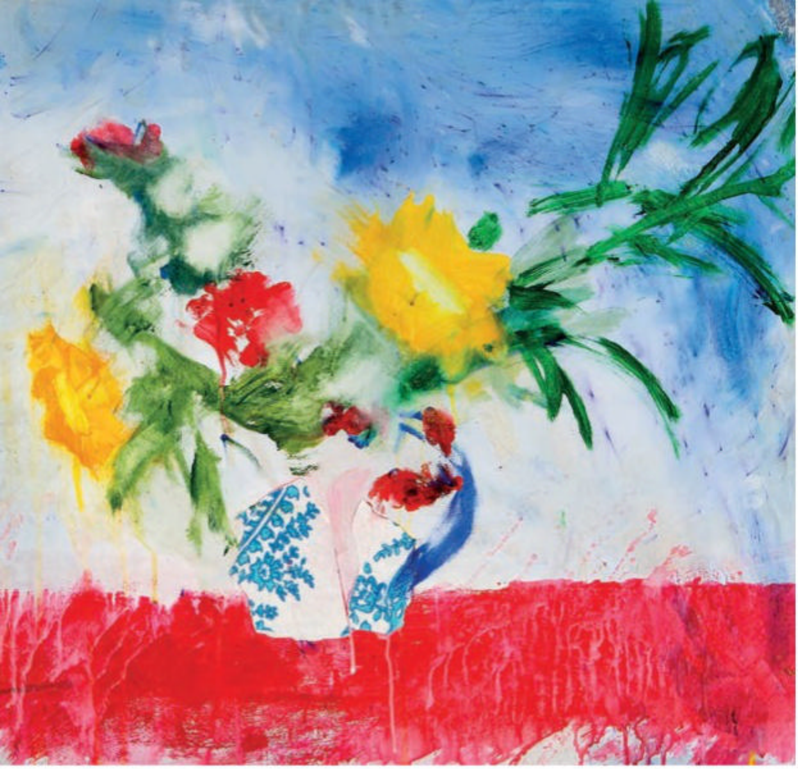
2 USE YOUR BODY

The painting process is a physical one. Reaching for the chosen colour, material and tool, I swiftly apply the paint and move on. The foliage is Sap Green and Jenkins Green, while the geraniums are a Cadmium Red. The main objective at this stage is to keep the momentum up – and the critical voice at bay – through action.

4 FIND CHARACTER

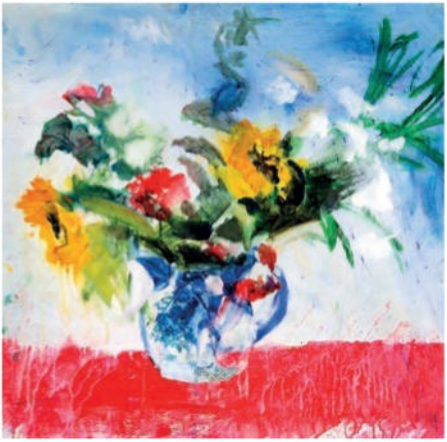
Here, Jenkins Green mixed with Burnt Umber describes the darkest green tones. It's helpful to half-close your eyes, so that you can clearly see these areas of dark. I add structure to the jug and find the position of the handle. Now each step is about getting closer to the feeling and character of the flowers themselves.





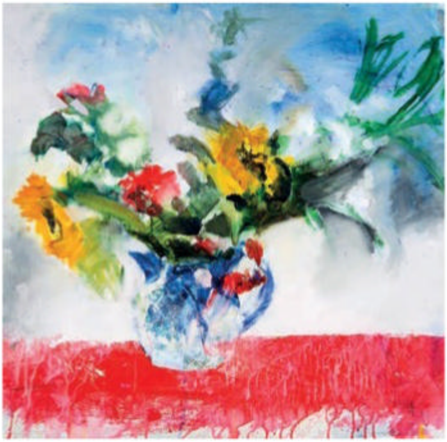
3 ESTABLISH COMPOSITION

Establishing the Cadmium Yellow sunflowers feels like an important step because they are a large part of the composition. Although the flowers look messy and are applied quickly, I have taken time to carefully observe their position and size. I like the diagonal sweep from the top right through the two sunflowers to the bottom left.



5 DESCRIBE SHAPE

I cut in with the white acrylic to give shape to the spout and to begin describing the lilies. The green acrylic is wiped away in places to capture the light background between leaves.



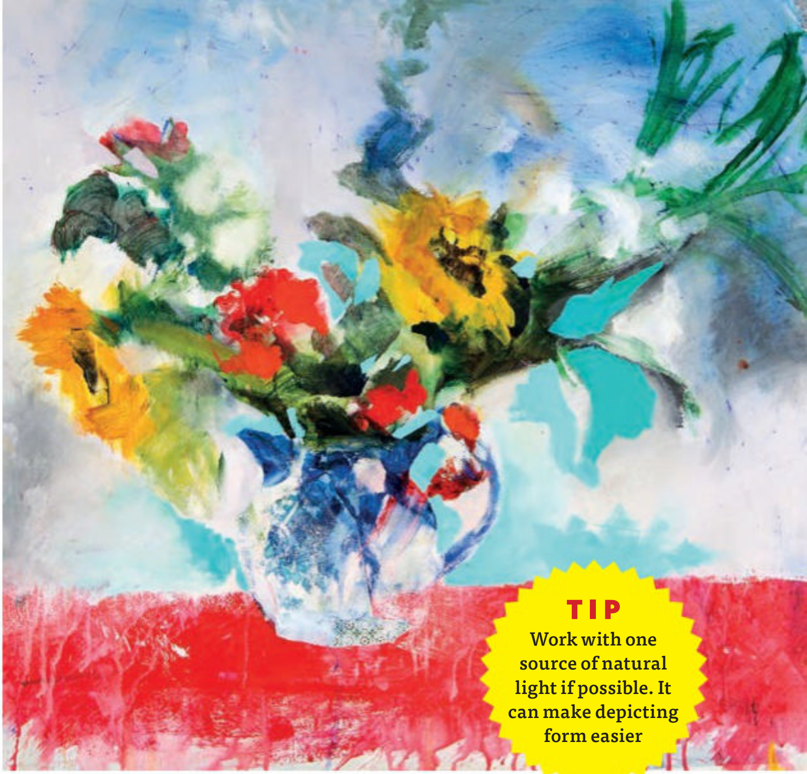
JIM MACKINTOSH

6 FIND THE TONE

The board that I'm working on had the remains of an old blue painting on it. I'm knocking back the blue to reflect the greyer tones of the background wall. This also has the satisfying effect of letting the blue of the jug be centre stage. ▶

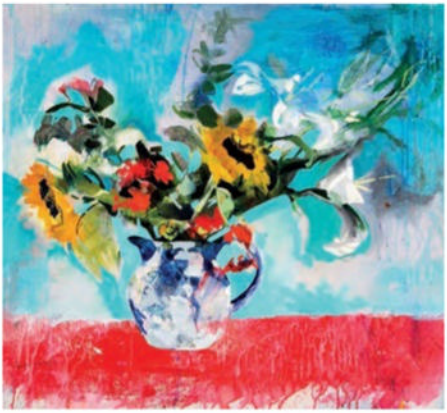
7 ADD CONTRAST

As I paint the Cadmium Red geraniums, I realise I want a contrasting colour to allow them to pop. So it's out with the grey and in with the blue. I decide to put my turquoise yoga mat on the wall behind. I begin changing the background grey to a mix of Cerulean Blue and White. Chipping in is satisfying.



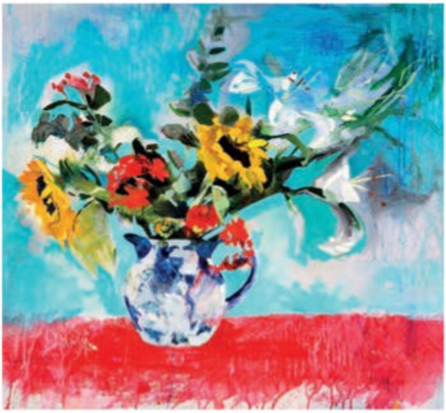
TIP

Work with one source of natural light if possible. It can make depicting form easier



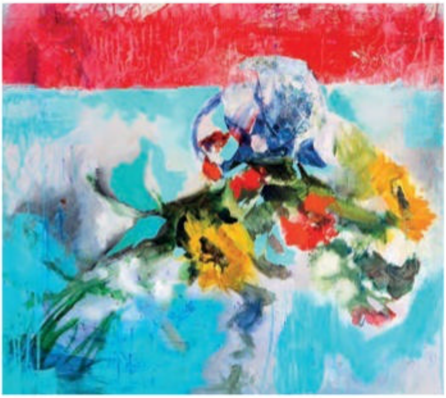
10 LIFT AND LIGHTEN

The cluster of drawn lily buds in the top right continues the diagonal upward sweep. There's no need to labour with botanical detail – a fluid-drawn line captures their shape. The lost-and-found third open lily is established, too, and further lifts and lightens the composition.



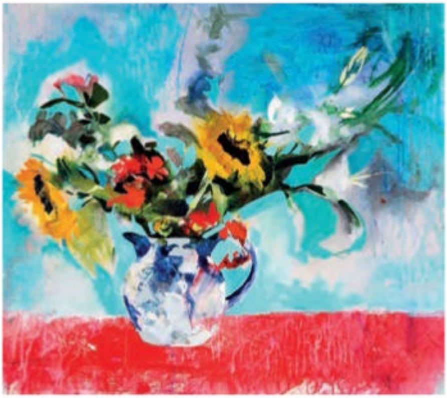
11 DESCRIBE THE PETALS

Here, I'm chiselling the shape of the bright geranium and the sunflower petals using paint straight from the tube. The oil paint describing the petals sits in relief on the surface. I've clarified the jug edge on the table top to anchor it down and defined the bright geraniums at the handle with the blue background colour.



8 LET IT RUN AWAY

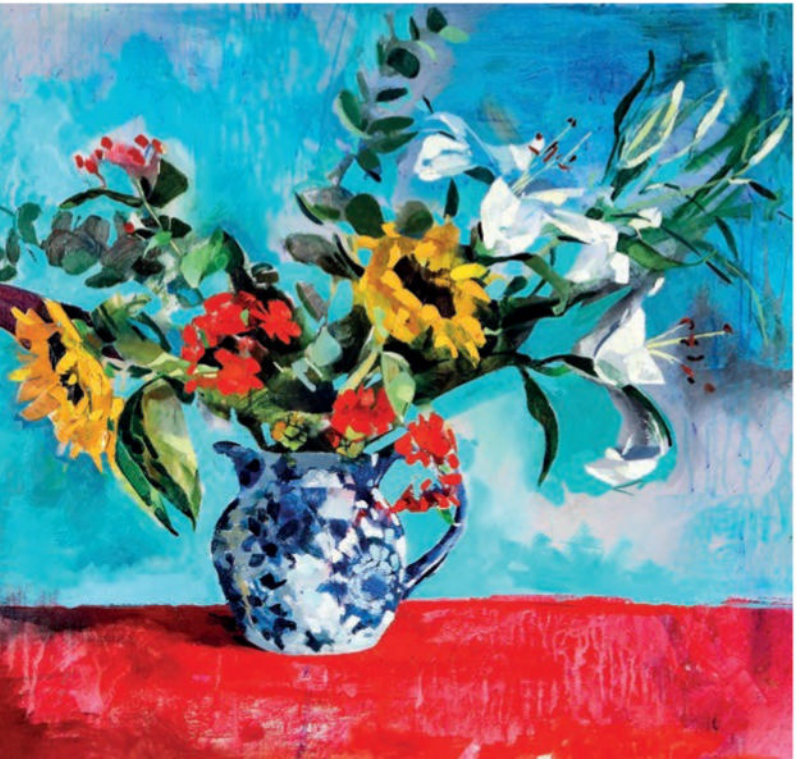
I turn the painting upside down and use the Cerulean Blue mixed with water to pull the colour to the top of the painting. The blue fluid runs offer a pleasing contrast to the opaque colour between the leaves and flowers.



JIM MACKINTOSH

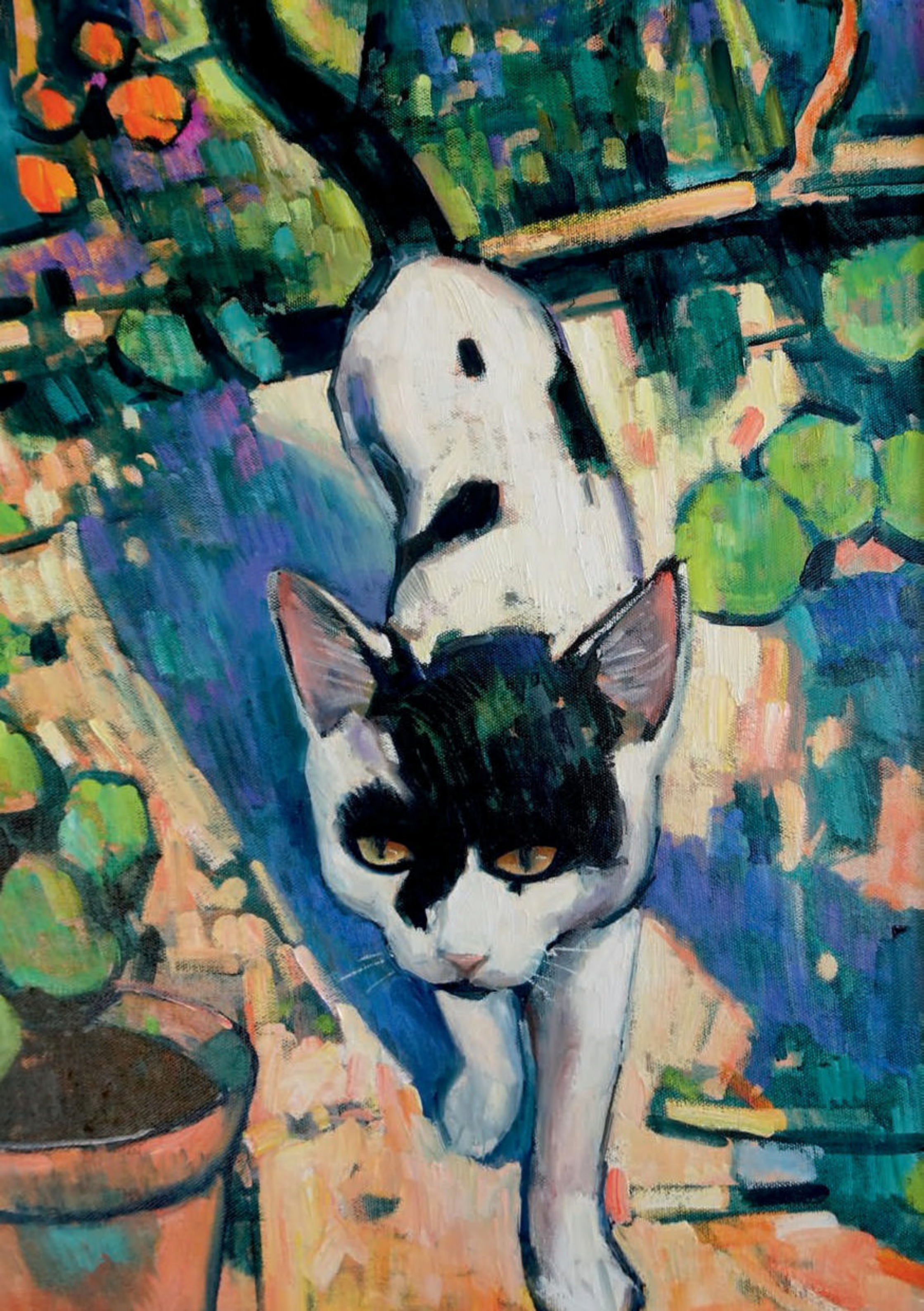
9 EXPLORE LIGHT AND DARK

It's time for oil. With firm, flat brushes, I find the darkest greens in the leaves and punctuate the whole still life with sharp contrasts of light and dark. I find light tones are best described in thick paint. Scooping up the Lemon Yellow and Titanium White mix for the lily stamens, I print the thick paint onto the board so they stand out.



12 KNOW WHEN TO STOP

After a necessary break – I recommend lots of these – I resume painting in the evening. After a while, the natural light goes and I'm forced to stop. I'm glad of this as I think there's still a lively energy to the flowers. Given more time, I could have painted the life out of them. Why not give this approach a go yourself? You might be surprised by the joy it offers. ☐



Making pictures

Rather than just paint a pet portrait, **Terence Clarke** wanted to make more of a chance encounter. He shows you how to take charge of your subject and create a true work of art

TERENCE'S MATERIALS

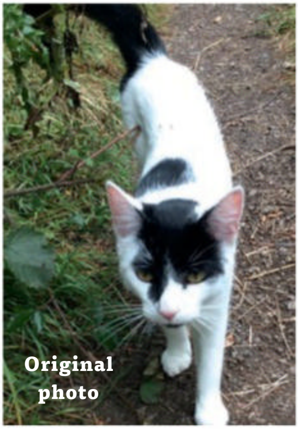
Paints
Daler-Rowney System 3 acrylics: Yellow Ochre, Vermilion Hue, Phthalo Blue, Phthalo Green and Titanium White.
Sennelier Finest Artists oils: Yellow Ochre, Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Yellow Medium, Vermilion, Quinacridone Magenta, Phthalo Green Warm, Prussian Blue, French Ultramarine and Titanium White

Brushes
Rosemary & Co Ivory filberts, sizes 2, 3, 5 and 6

Support
Gerstaecker primed cotton canvas, 38x56cm
Palette knife, Sketchbook
Compressed charcoal

It's hard to define what it is about a subject that makes you chose it as a starting point. This painting of a cat is an interesting example.

Animals are not my usual subject matter but as soon as I saw this stray feline, I knew I had to paint her. I was on a walk when she stepped out on to the path. What was interesting was the purely abstract qualities of her unusual markings – there was a tremendous graphic punch to the black and white.



Original photo

The very form of the cat's sleek body and almost comic-book markings on her face were very attractive elements for picture making. I made one or two very quick drawings then, obviously, took a couple of photos to capture the constantly moving elegance of her form. There was a personality and quirkiness about her that I liked.

Doing something different is always a good way of refreshing your approach and developing your openness to new ideas and subjects.

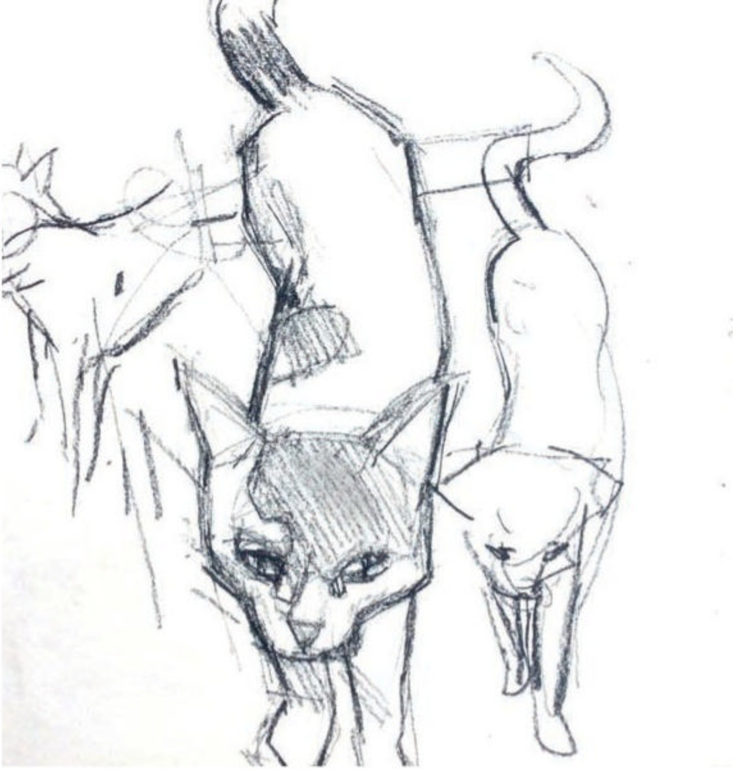
You will see, however, that by using the photo and drawings as a starting point, this was very much a constructed composition. An exercise in picture making; far more than just a cute little cat.

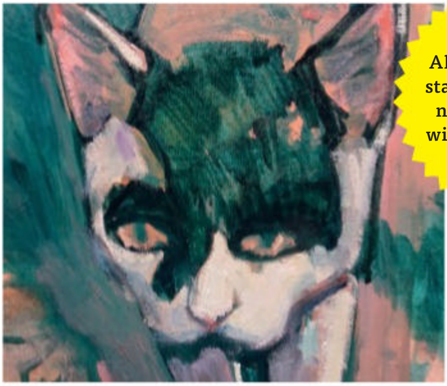
terenceclarke.co.uk ▸

1 SKETCH YOUR SUBJECT

I began by making a super quick sketchbook drawing of my first encounter with the cat using compressed charcoal. After a quick line drawing on the right, I then drew a pose that I thought might work for the composition.

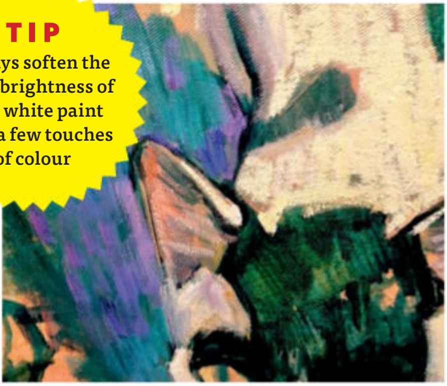
I used the compressed charcoal in a very fluid way and drew without taking my eyes off the subject. This is almost impossible to get right, but somehow through experience you get something. This quick compositional pose became the basis of the whole painting.





TIP

Always soften the stark brightness of neat white paint with a few touches of colour

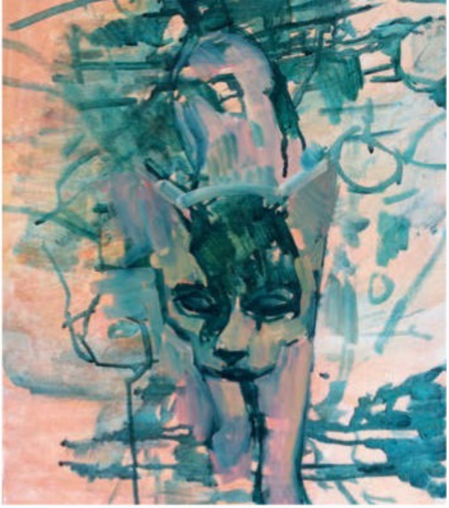


4 LET THINGS DEVELOP

I was using thick, impasto oil paint throughout this painting, applied over the thin acrylic washes. You can see here how the drawing of the head was quite weak. It's difficult getting to grips with the unfamiliar proportions of animal heads – it was almost as if I was painting too much of a human face here. This will need correcting as the painting develops.

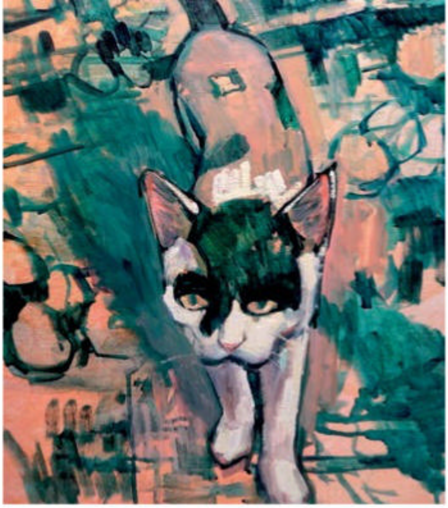
5 SOFTEN THE CONTRASTS

Here, I was applying thick Titanium White oil paint which has been mixed with a little Yellow Ochre to soften the contrasts. I was also developing the painting in its own right, rather than just copying the photo. The use of strong purple shadows and accents of Phthalo green enlivened the background and gave a much more interesting context to the space around the cat than my original photo.



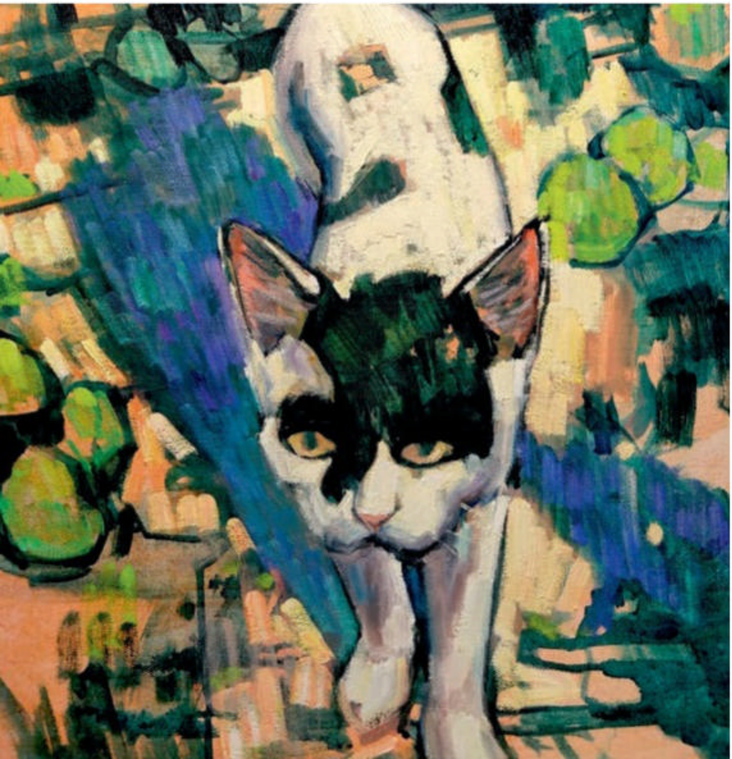
2 DRAW IN ACRYLIC

I began drawing the image onto my canvas using thinned acrylic paint. Because acrylic dries very quickly, it is useful for making rapid changes as the drawing develops. I was working over a warm Vermilion and Yellow Ochre ground with a mix of Phthalo Green and Phthalo Blue acrylic to draw with. At this stage, everything is fluid and open.



3 SET THE TONES

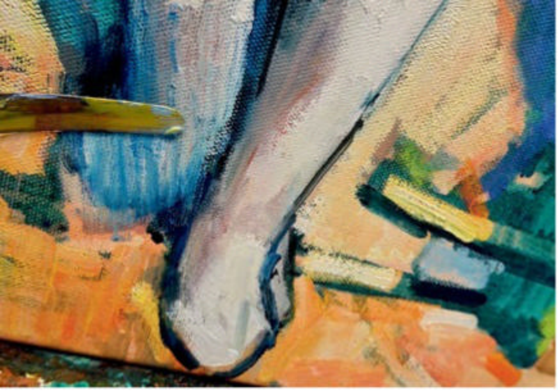
After more work on the acrylic washes, I let the whole thing dry thoroughly before starting with the oil paint. I chose an underpainting that was very mid-toned as this allowed me to come in with bolder more contrasted tones and feed them into the drawn image. These subdued tones of the underpainting will help to hold the image together as I develop the painting later on.

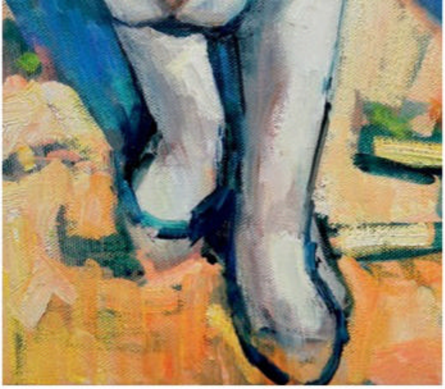


6 DEFINE FORMS

The background shapes and patterns helped to define the form of the cat. I wanted the arabesque shapes to somehow suggest the movement of the body, while the sweep of the tail gave a sense of the live quality of the actual animal.

At this point, I noticed some real problems with the drawing of the legs and the head. There was an almost puppet-like quality to the face, which I didn't like at all. It's usually halfway through a picture that the problems arrive, and you have to tackle them with courage. ▶





7 PARE THINGS BACK

I used a palette knife to scrape back the paint on the left leg and then used some thin Prussian Blue oil to redraw the right leg. The positions of both legs were just slightly out but adjusting them made all the difference to the actual pose of the moving cat.

It's always my experience that tackling the problems "head-on" in a painting is the best method for achieving good results. Never leave anything you know to be weak or inaccurate – it will live in the painting forever and always disappoint you.

8 REWORK THE DRAWING

I had somehow made the left leg far too long, so I decided to completely redraw the front legs.

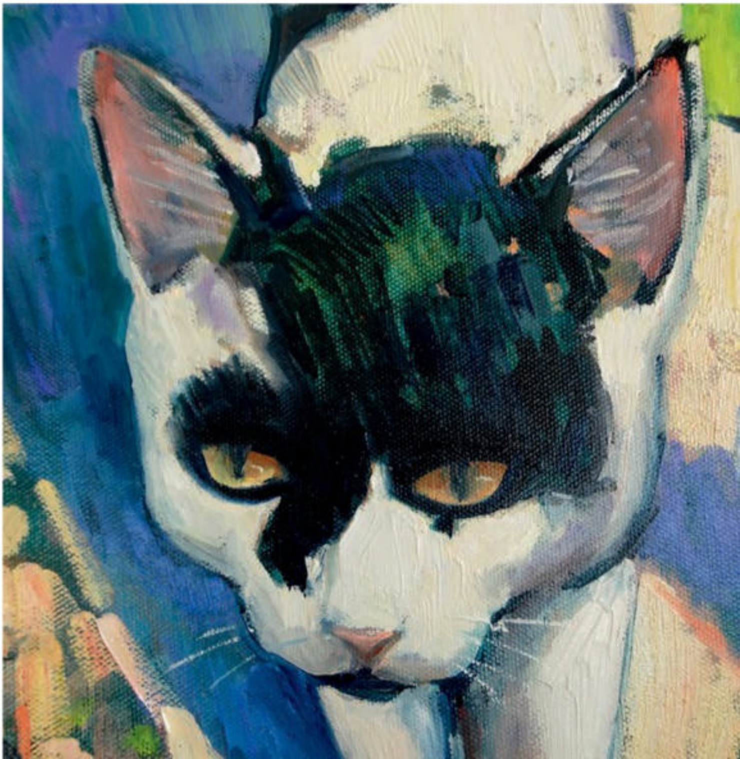
When drawing, it's quite common to draw what you think you know, rather than what you can actually see. I'd somehow assumed that both legs were the same length but of course, the photo showed something much more subtle.

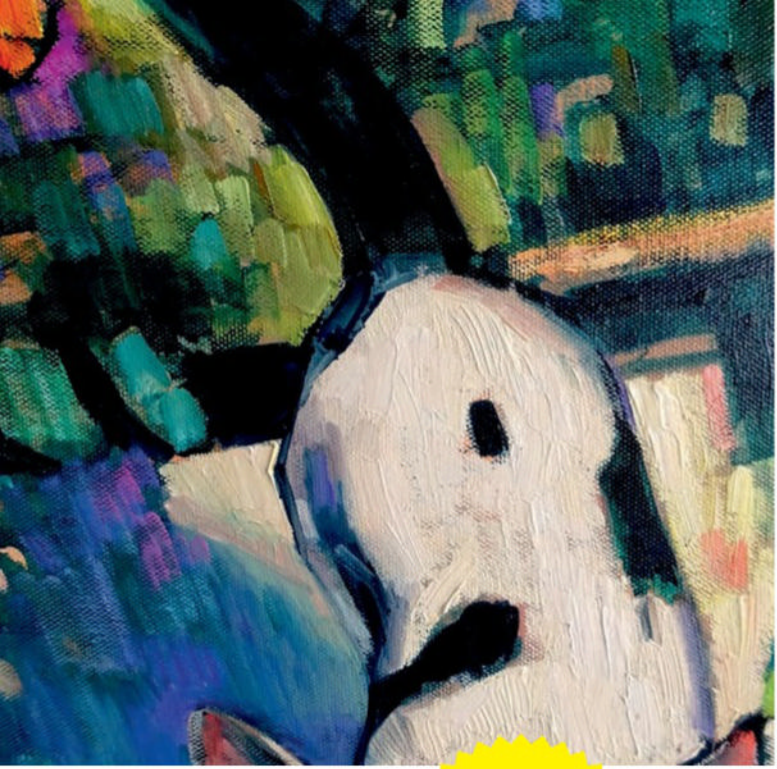
This redrawing also brought the front leg to the very edge of the composition which was much better too.

10 FOCUS ON BRUSHWORK

I finally reworked the head, gradually teasing the drawing with paint. This was a delicate process because I wanted to keep the brushwork fresh and lively, while also improving the forms.

You will notice that the paint quality moves from very thin translucent darks to thick, fat highlights. This is a classic oil painting technique. Notice too that the thick brushstrokes behind the head suggest fur, rather than describing it in detail.



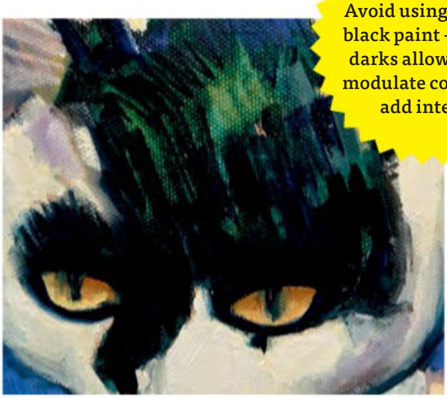


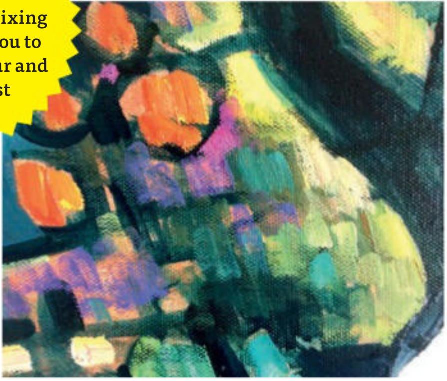
9 USE ARTISTIC LICENCE

I continued to build the background, using thickly applied colour to define the tail. I also used a little artistic licence by adding one small spot to the markings. I agonised over this, but in the end, the graphic necessity of that one spot was too important to the composition. Ultimately, I was making a work of art, not a pet portrait, so the quality of the image was my primary concern.

TIP

Avoid using tubes of black paint – mixing darks allows you to modulate colour and add interest



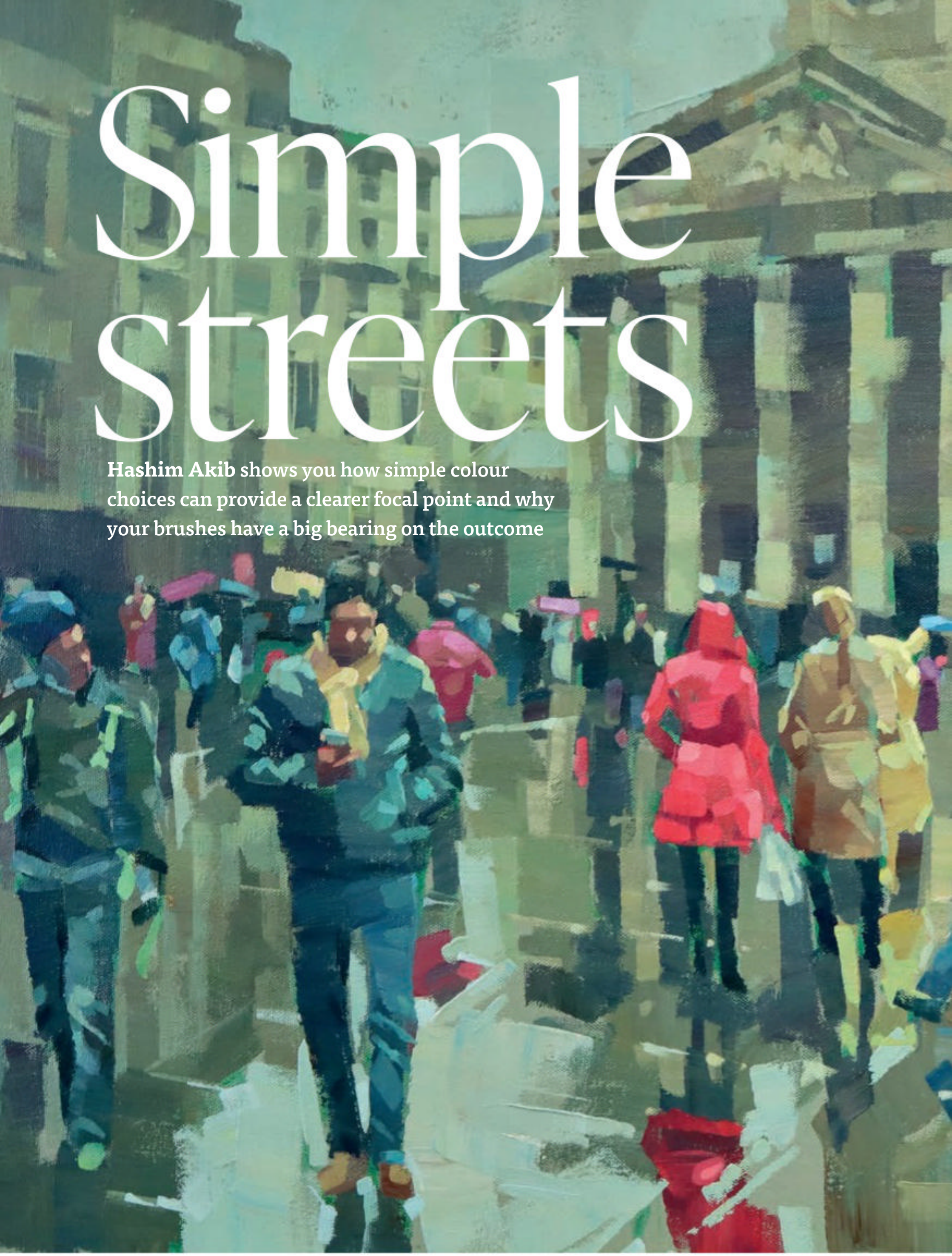


11 MIX BLACKS

I never use a tube of black paint, preferring to mix one instead. Here I mixed a black using Prussian Blue, Vermillion and a little Phthalo Green. This meant I could modulate the black, adding more of one colour in places to push the mix into subtle changes of hue. Black itself is a beautiful colour but even a mixed one has to be handled with subtlety or it can completely deaden a painting.

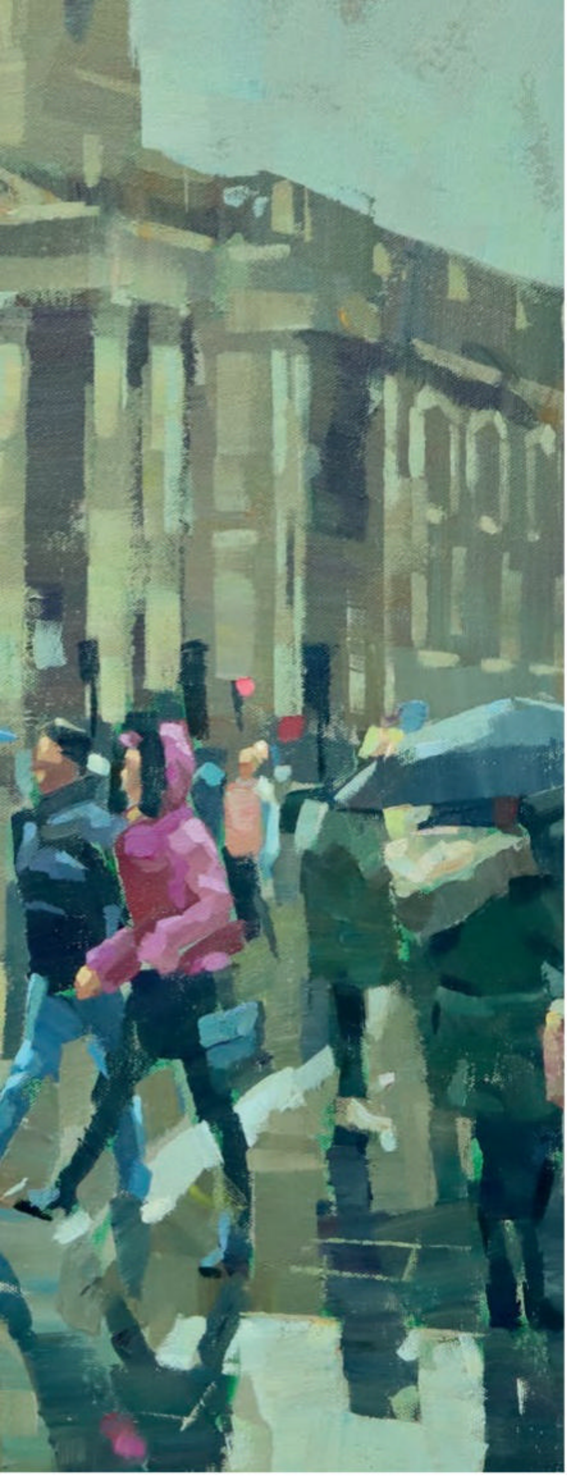
12 ADD FINAL TOUCHES

Essential to any successful painting is its abstract design. The cat was primarily black and white, so I needed to enrich the background. I used Vermilion and with a touch of Lemon Yellow to sketch in the geraniums from my garden. These sudden flashes of colour draw the viewer’s eye across the composition, adding to the sense of the cat’s movement.□



Simple streets

Hashim Akib shows you how simple colour choices can provide a clearer focal point and why your brushes have a big bearing on the outcome



HASHIM'S MATERIALS

Paints

Amsterdam Standard acrylics: Azo Yellow Lemon, Azo Yellow Medium, Pyrrole Red, Primary Magenta, Ultramarine Violet, Permanent Blue Violet, Brilliant Blue, Cobalt Blue (Ultramarine), Phthalo Blue, Greenish Blue, Prussian Blue (Phthalo), Phthalo Green, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna and Titanium White

Brushes

Daler-Rowney Skyflow large flat brushes, sizes 1/2", 1", 1.5" and 2"

Support

Stretched cotton canvas, 60x75cm

Kitchen roll,

White plastic tray

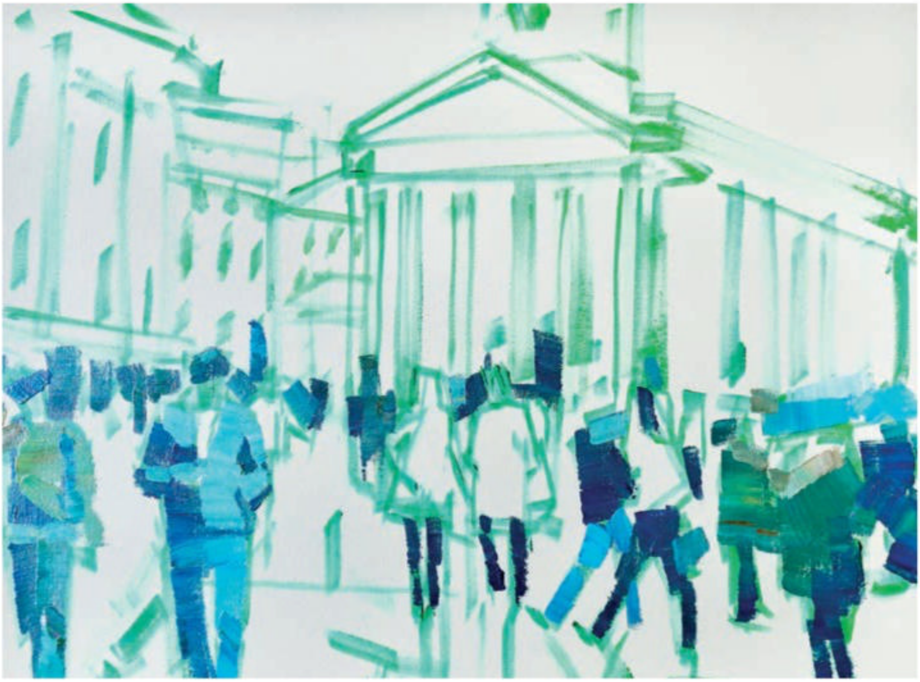
Water pot

1 APPLY A BASE COLOUR

Painting a street scene in acrylics can be tricky, as you contend with rapid drying times and trying to capture too much detail. If your pictures look flat or confused, try to remember that acrylic suffers if you excessively blend. Confidently placed brushstrokes are the goal, made with neater, thicker combinations of pigment.

Try using larger flathead brushes instead of smaller round ones. It might take time to get used to working with them, but you will be rewarded with an ability to quickly block in.

I used them to apply a very thin base colour of Brilliant Blue, Burnt Sienna and Titanium White to my canvas and left to dry. ▶



2 SKETCH THINGS OUT

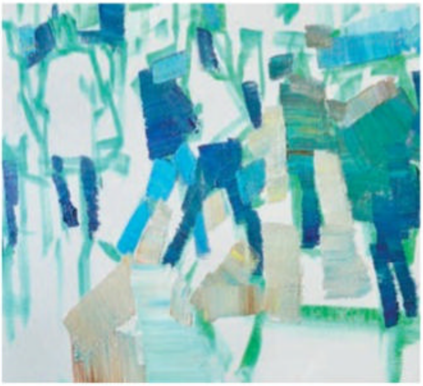
I made a very simple sketch with a 0.5” brush to establish the main forms. My aim was to familiarise myself with the elements and make mental notes about tones, colours or moods I wanted to convey. I used fairly neat paint for this but I also lightly dampened the brushes to avoid paint drying on them and to provide some lubrication when applying paint to the canvas.

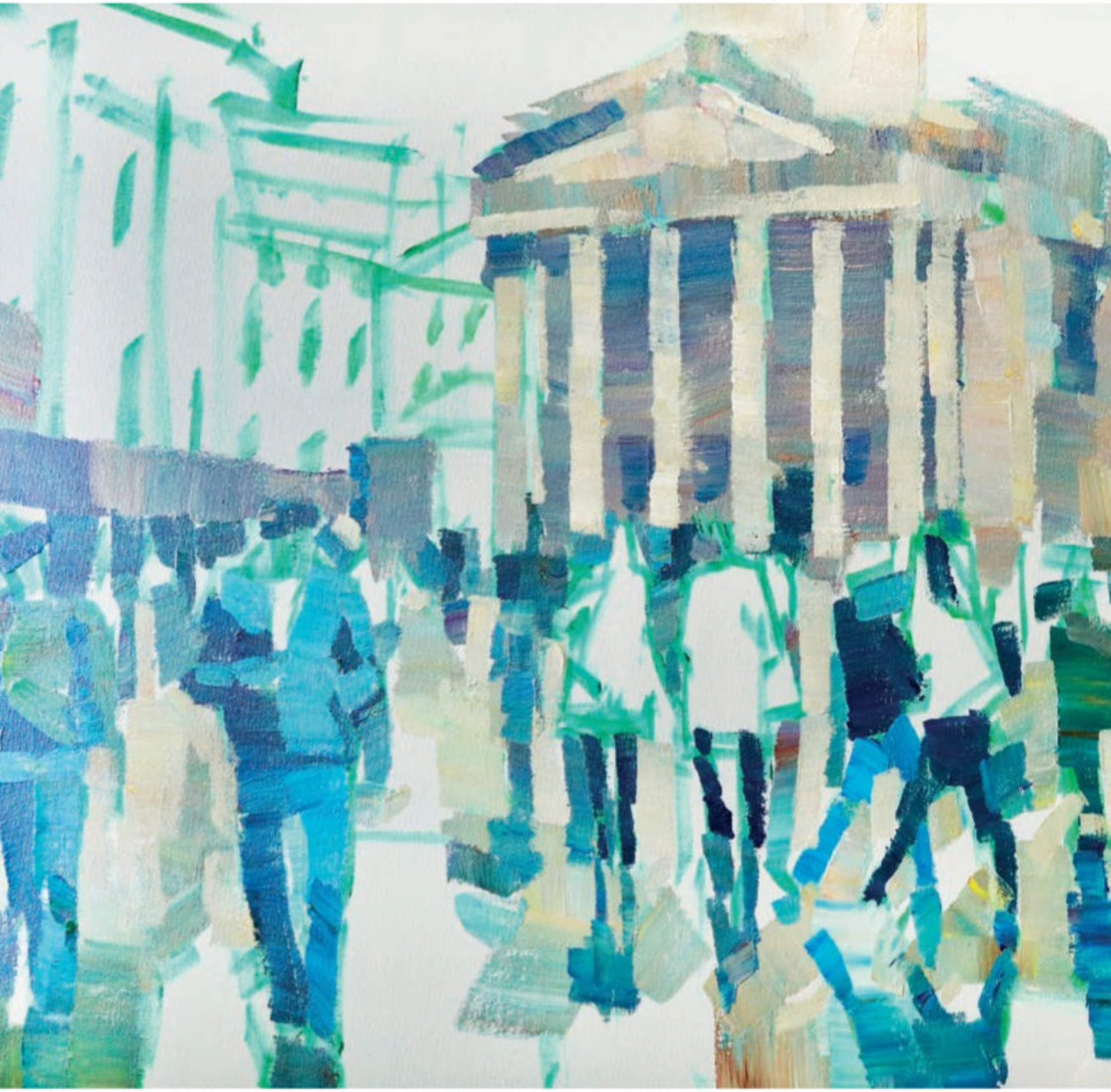
Using the 2” flat brush, I mixed a range of greys from blues, violets, Phthalo Green and Burnt Sienna, adding Titanium White to soften the tones. With these subsequent mixtures, I described a few figures on the canvas.

3 RELAX YOUR ARM

These early stages are painted with what I like to call the “floppy arm” technique: big brushes are loaded with plenty of paint and direct marks are applied in various directions while avoiding the arm firming up.

Not allowing yourself multiple layers of paint to correct things is a good way of encouraging yourself to focus on accurately judging the quantities of paint and the pressure applied in each stroke. I added more Titanium White, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna and Azo Yellow Medium to my greyish mixes for the pavement, making sure I left space to drop lighter and darker colours in later.



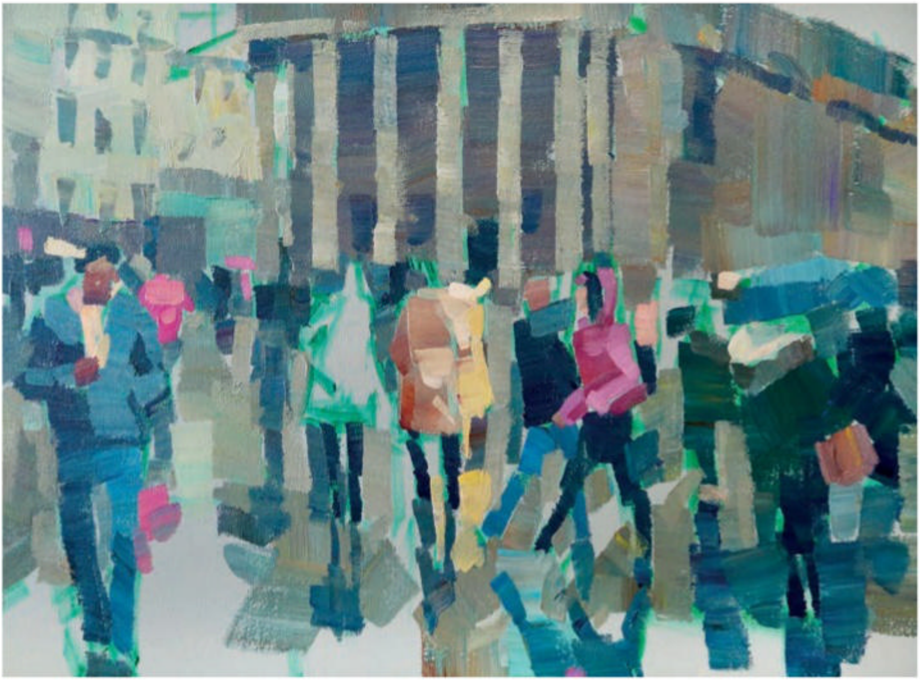


4 SET THE SCENE

Things can look drab once areas are filled with these earthy and bluish-grey pigments, but keep in mind the vibrant colours and highlights that are coming. When describing the buildings behind, I applied large blocks next to each other. The columns were more distinct, so I made more effort to pull them forward. ▶

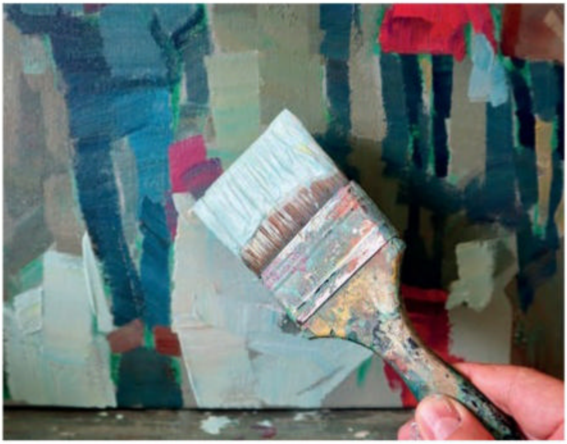
TIP

Avoid making every line straight and perfect – uneven edges add personality



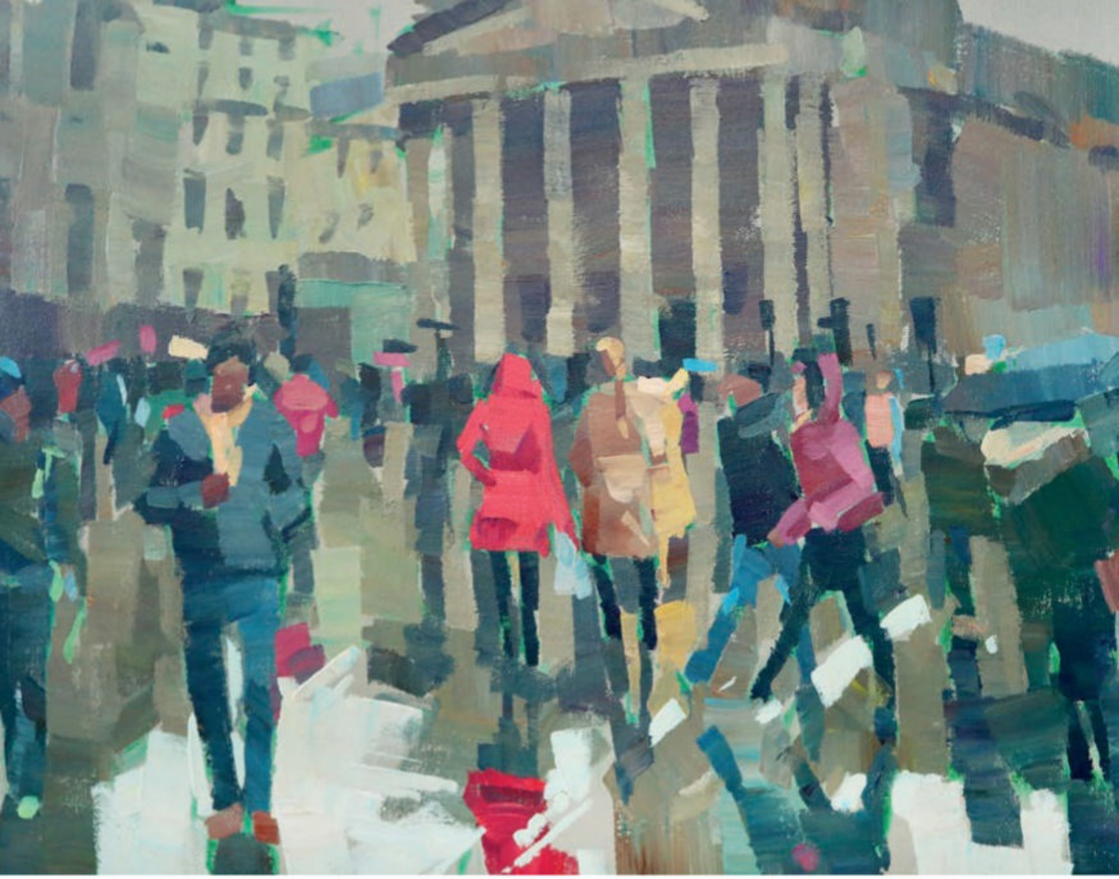
5 PICK OUT COLOURS

In keeping with the palette used so far, I introduced brighter mixes with small amounts of grey. In a change to the photo, I used a purple-red mix for a few figures' jackets, leaving the pulsating red for the central figure only. I used the 0.5" and 1" brushes to shape the figures. There was almost no blending or feathering of the colours as my preference was to place a block next to or on top of another block. Variation in tones and tints instead created the modelling effect.



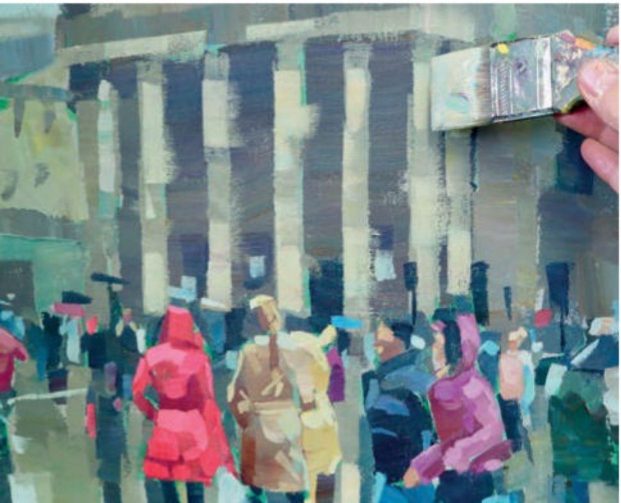
6 BE CONFIDENT

I mixed plenty of Titanium White with small quantities of Brilliant Blue, Burnt Sienna and various yellows and applied this to the foreground light area with the 2" brush. The width of the brush can be tricky to navigate in small areas, but the marks are much more interesting. Try to be confident. It's worth noting that even these lighter tints will dry darker, so compensate for the colour accordingly. These areas of light also provided interesting abstract shapes in the foreground.



7 DON'T OVERDO DETAIL

Although the reference photo contained other subtle tints in the pavement, I chose to leave these out to avoid too much clutter. The larger shapes helped to concentrate the eye on the smaller marks, as does the contrast of earthier colours against the brighter ones. I used my smaller brushes for the intricate parts of the figures and the details in the background. This also prevented the final painting from looking too neat or too clinical.



8 BALANCE THINGS UP

On the buildings, I used a mix of Titanium White, Azo Yellow Lemon and Azo Yellow Medium and small amounts of Burnt Sienna, blues and violets.

Additional lights (Titanium White with touches of Azo Yellow Lemon and various blues) were added to certain figures on the forehead, shoulders and creases in clothes to create more interest. I also spent some time popping the light in the pavement with tints and applying crisp directional lines to break up the verticals. ***hashimakib.co.uk*** □

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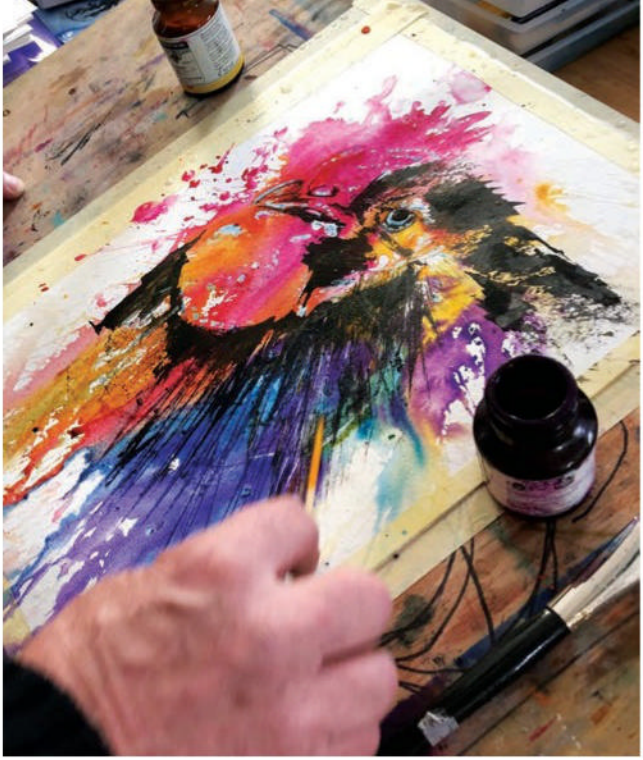

Paint with acrylic ink

Founder of The Art Trading Company, **Sue Kemp** reveals five ways to get the best from this exciting medium

I love Rohrer & Klingner acrylic inks. They're made by hand and combine acrylic resin, which is resistant to yellowing and is lightfast, with highly pigmented colourants. Inks can be applied using a dip pen or brush, and made translucent by adding water. They're permanent when dry.

1 Splash water onto a big sheet of paper and drop in ink while it is still wet. Enjoy the pigment strength and the way ink moves around.

2 Float a layer of ink onto a piece of paper and dry, then float a second colour on top. Unlike watercolour, inks won't mix because the resin seals each layer as it dries creating a stained-glass effect.

3 These inks mix beautifully with any artist-quality watercolour so can be used in combination with, or even under and over a finished watercolour painting to add vibrancy.

4 Use acrylic inks as an alternative to traditional pen and wash. They will seal completely when dry allowing loose, vibrant layers of ink or watercolour to be painted over it.

5 The inks combine well with each other and will also work with other media, such as granulation fluid. For interesting effects, try silicon spray (such as WD40), wax resist, salt and many other watercolour texture techniques. ☐

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